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Volume 1, Issue 5
August / September 2008

ORLANDO **Attractions** MAGAZINE

Nights in the Parks

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ALIVE After Sunset

TOP TEN

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Surviving
Lines

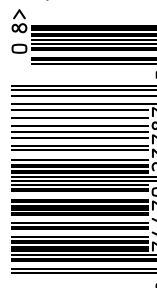
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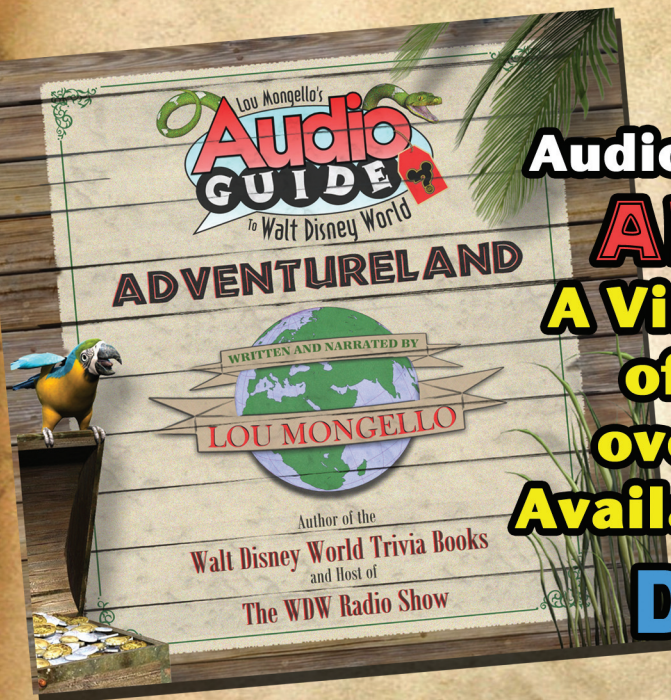
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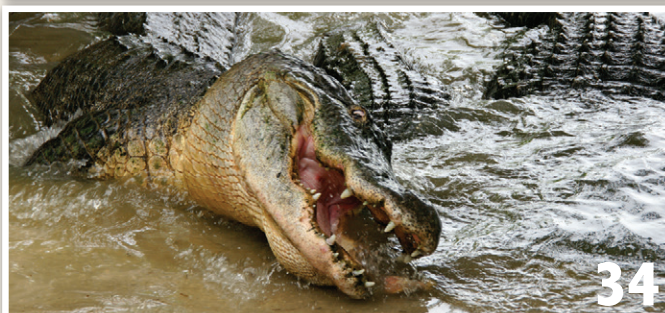
DisneyWorldTrivia.com

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Photo by Bret Roseboom.

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Letters



Beyond the Parks

Every so often, when the theme park moons align, Orlando's big three (Walt Disney World, Universal, and SeaWorld) settle down from nearly-constant announcements or attraction grand openings to let their parks simply run their day-to-day operations. Generally, this takes place during the busy summer months. So while our last four issues included articles on new attractions and special events like Disney's Toy Story Midway Mania, Epcot's 25th anniversary, Universal's The Simpsons Ride, and the opening of SeaWorld's Aquatica, we happily embrace these few-and-far-between chances to take a step out into the rest of Orlando to bring you information on some of the city's best "other" attractions.

Ricky & Matt

Ricky Brigante and Matt Roseboom
Publishers and Orlando Fans

I LIKE WHAT'S MISSING

I just received the latest issue of OAM. Great job as usual! While browsing through the magazine, I noticed a couple of things missing that I find in almost all other magazines.

1. There are no subscription inserts flying out every which way, cluttering up my floor.

2. I have yet to see a single "continued on page X" anywhere in the magazine. All the articles are continuous and can be read without interruption.

So, I just wanted to thank you for these omissions.

Gordon Free
Freeland, Wash.

Never say never, but we have no plans to start adding either of those to the magazine.

SHREDDED BY THE POST OFFICE

I just wanted to say thank you. I e-mailed you about my subscription being shredded by the U.S. Postal Service and you quickly sent out a new magazine. I just wanted to say I very much appreciate the gesture

and loved reading the magazine as always.

Carol Engel
West Babylon, N.Y.

The majority of the issues we mail out arrive without harm, but occasionally some arrive damaged, with just the cover or never at all. Please let us know and we'll get a new copy mailed out.

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME BUTTER WITH THAT?

Bless you! I just subscribed and ordered back issues and this is the best thing for an Orlando fan since sliced bread. While going on the Internet to read about attractions and news is fun, I love having it in a magazine I can take my time with and go back and savor every drop. Thank you for all your hard work.

Daphne Neubauer
Newark, Del.

OH NO!

I signed up early for this publication and I really enjoy each and every one. Unfortunately I just received issue four the other day and put it on the kitchen table. When I got home from work the next day, the table was cleaned off. My new unread issue was mistakenly thrown out by the nanny. I am deeply depressed and need my fix.

Is there any way you would be willing to send me a replacement issue? It was amazing how I tore the house apart looking for it, thinking it was moved or misplaced or actually put where all magazines go in our house (in the rack).

Hopefully you can help me out. Keep up the great work.

Michael Brown
Bolingbrook, Ill.

We've mailed a replacement copy out to you, but let that be a lesson to everyone. Keep an eye on your Attractions Magazine. We've had other reports of the magazine "disappearing."

WHAT IF ...

Hey A.M., here's an idea I have for a fun section you could have in your magazine. My friends and I are big theme park-atics,

so for fun, a question we always pose to each other is something along the lines of, "If you could make up a whole new ride for any theme park, what would it be and where would it go?" I think it would be fun to have a section where readers can send in their dream ideas for rides that might have been, but never were. Or even ideas for new theme parks. Imagination's the limit. They could even send in sketches and doodles of their dream attraction.

Louie Quevedo
Miami, Fla.

That's an interesting idea. Readers, send in your ideas along with a drawing and we'll print them here in our Letters section.

HIDDEN MICKEY HUNTERS



My son Robbie and daughter Emilee are avid "hidden Mickey" collectors and they were wanting to know if you were going to have pictures of any in your publication.

On our last trip they discovered at least 50 hidden Mickeys and took pictures of them all. Here are a couple of the ones they took. Can you guess where they were taken?

Michael Cox
Saint Charles, Mo.

While we don't plan a regular feature of hidden Mickey pictures, we'd be glad to showcase them. So readers, send us photos of the hidden Mickeys you've found.

ps. One was taken in Dinoland at Animal Kingdom and the other was on the wall as you exit the Journey Into Imagination With Figment ride at Epcot.

You can't stump us!

PRO PARK HOPPER

Today was my first actual attempt at professional park hopping. This was my first time visiting three parks in less than six hours. I parked at Epcot, then monorailed over to Magic Kingdom, monorailed back, walked to my car, went back in the

park, walked back out to my car, drove to Hollywood Studios, walked in, walked, walked, walked, finally found the shop I was looking for, realized it was closed, and headed back to guest services. Why? To collect as many free passholder lithographs in one day as possible.

What I do not understand is the actual point of park hopping. Did Disney create it to start marketing to ADD prone Americans? Is it meant to appeal to people with no time so they can do more? The whole irony of park hopping is that less is done. A park hop takes at least 20 minutes, involving waiting and riding two trams and drive time. From my experience, buses are even slower. Instead, more could be done staying in one park. If you are on a multiday vacation, relax. There is no need to get all the major attractions done in one day. Ignore the Disney marketing, save money on your park tickets and have a better vacation. Don't park hop.

Kurt Nelson
Winter Garden, Fla.

ALL EARS

I am so grateful to the All Ears (online) newsletter for reviewing your new magazine. I also was a dedicated reader of the former *Disney Magazine* and was so disappointed when it stopped publication. I now have a new link to Disney news because of *Orlando Attractions*. It is the only magazine I read cover to cover.

Thanks so much for your excellent new magazine.

Diane Nevius
Fremont, Neb.

We're glad you like it. Thanks to Michelle Scribner-MacLean for her review on allearsnet.com, and we'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome all of our new subscribers.

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REMEMBER WHEN...



In our last issue, we compared a present-day photo of an area of Universal Studios to a photo taken over 15 years ago, showing that hardly anything had changed in the interim. This time, we're making it obvious that while not every corner of Orlando's theme parks changes regularly, quite a lot does get updated over the years.

Appropriately, Tomorrowland in the Magic Kingdom is one of the most regularly changed areas of any theme park in Orlando. The above-left photo, sent in by Carol Brigante from Altamonte Springs, Fla., was taken in the early 1970s, shortly after Walt Disney World first opened. The above-right photo was taken from nearly the same spot over 20 years later. In two decades' time, Tomorrowland has gone from a drab, monochrome vision of the future to a colorful journey into the world of science-fiction and fantasy.

Stink beetles are better known as stink bugs or their name

CrittersPond.com

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Vacation Planner

AUGUST

Through Aug. 10 The Sounds Like Summer Concert Series will feature Captain Fantastic, a tribute to Elton John through the 3rd, then The Sounds of The Supremes will perform.

Through Aug. 17 Summer Nights at Busch Gardens features extended hours, special entertainment, festive food and drink.



Through Sept. 1 SeaWorld AfterDark presents Shamu Rocks, Bayside Ski Jam, Sea Lions Tonite and Mistify.

16 The 2008 and 2009 **Florida Sports Hall of Fame Induction** will take place at 7 p.m. at Cypress Gardens.

23 Miss Winter Haven USA and **Miss Cypress Gardens USA Pageant** will take place at 6 p.m. at Cypress Gardens.

30 Belles, Blues & BBQ will be held at Cypress Gardens.

SEPTEMBER



5 - Oct. 31 Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party will take place on select nights at the Magic Kingdom.

5-6 Rock the Universe will take place at Universal Studios as some of the biggest names in Christian rock take the stage.

5-6 Night of Joy will take place at Disney's Hollywood Studios as some of the most powerful voices in Contemporary Christian music take to the stage.

9 Terrific Tuesdays at SeaWorld featuring Fall Landscaping: How to use the colors of the season.

23 Terrific Tuesdays at Busch Gardens featuring Fragrant Landscaping.



26-27 Halloween Horror Nights will take place each evening at Universal Studios.

26-27 Howl-O-Scream preview at Busch Gardens from 7:30 p.m. to 1 a.m.



26 - Nov. 9 The Epcot International Food & Wine Festival will take place, featuring the following concerts:

Sept. 26-27 - Big Bad Voodoo Daddy

Sept. 28-30 - Sheena Easton

Oct. 1-4 - Starship starring Mickey Thomas

Oct. 5-7 - En Vogue

Oct. 8-9 - Jonny Lang

Oct. 10-12 - Peabo Bryson

Oct. 13-14 - Sister Hazel

Oct. 15-16 - David Sanborn

Oct. 17-18 - Jon Secada

Oct. 19-21 - Spyro Gyra

Oct. 22-23 - Otis Day & the Knights

Oct. 24-26 - Exposé

Oct. 27-28 - Kool & The Gang

Oct. 29-30 - Boyz II Men

Oct. 31-Nov. 2 - Atlanta Rhythm Section

Nov. 3-5 - David Cassidy

Nov. 6-7 - Night Ranger

Nov. 8-9 - Los Lobos

27 - 28 Girl Scout weekend at Cypress Gardens. Victoria Huggins will perform on the concert stage both days.

OCTOBER

2 - 4 Howl-O-Scream at Busch Gardens starts at 7:30 p.m.

2 - 5 Halloween Horror Nights will take place each evening at Universal Studios.

4 Hundreds of classic and late model Chevrolets, Pontiacs, Buicks and Oldsmobiles will be on display at the **All-GM Auto Show** inside Silver Springs.

4 Pooch Pool Party at Cypress Gardens. Bring your dog to the water park. There will be a swimwear contest for dogs and chicken and beef flavored snow cones available.

9-12 Halloween Horror Nights will take place each evening at Universal Studios.

9 - 11 Howl-O-Scream at Busch Gardens starts at 7:30 p.m.

10 - 11 Oktoberfest in Celebration, Fla. starting at 5 p.m. each day.

16 - 19 Halloween Horror Nights will take place each evening at Universal Studios.

16 - 18 Howl-O-Scream at Busch Gardens starts at 7:30 p.m.

22 - 26 Halloween Horror Nights will take place each evening at Universal Studios.

23 - 25 Howl-O-Scream at Busch Gardens starts at 7:30 p.m.

24 Billy Currington will be in concert at 7:30 p.m. at Cypress Gardens.

26 Cypress Gardens will hold a **Car & Truck Show** in their concert area.

29 - Nov. 1 Halloween Horror Nights will take place each evening at Universal Studios.

30 - Nov. 1 Howl-O-Scream at Busch Gardens starts at 7:30 p.m.

For More Information

Walt Disney World Resort

www.disneyworld.com

(407) 939-6244

Universal Orlando

www.universolorlando.com

(407) 363-8000

SeaWorld Orlando

www.seaworld.com/orlando

(800) 327-2424

Busch Gardens

www.buschgardens.com/BGT

(888) 800-5447

Cypress Gardens

www.cypressgardens.com

(863) 324-2111

All events and dates are subject to change. Please check with the proper organization before attending.

Work in Progress ?

Manta Coaster Confirmed!

■ **STATUS:**
IN THE WORKS

LOCATION:
SEAWORLD ORLANDO



SeaWorld has confirmed that their next big project is the building of **Manta**, a new attraction based on rays. The attraction is made up of two related but very different parts. Over 300 rays of varying species will be visible from floor-to-ceiling 9-foot-tall windows. In addition, a 220-foot overhead viewing panel will allow guests to watch rays swim above them. Beyond the new aquarium, a new flying coaster will be built putting guests horizontally face-down through the sky and over a lagoon, riding on the back of a giant Manta ray. The ride will last two minutes and 35 seconds and will hit a top speed of 56 miles per hour. Manta is scheduled to open in Summer 2009.

Orlando Skyline Addition

LOCATION: NEAR SEAWORLD

■ **STATUS:**
IN THE WORKS



The Great Wheel is coming to Orlando. The Great Wheel Corporation recently announced that they'll be building a 400-foot-tall observation wheel near I-4 and SeaWorld. Rides inside the wheel's 24 air-conditioned capsules, each holding up to 40 guests, will last 30 minutes. In addition, underneath the wheel will be an 80,848 square-foot terminal filled with stores and restaurants.

Clubs Closing Soon

LOCATION:
DOWNTOWN DISNEY

■ **STATUS:**
IN THE WORKS



The six clubs at Downtown Disney's Pleasure Island are scheduled to close on Sept. 27. Their replacement is said to be more shopping and dining options for Disney's guests. For more information on Pleasure Island's club closings, turn to page 48 of this issue.

Harry Potter Details Emerge

■ **STATUS:**
UNDER CONSTRUCTION

LOCATION: ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE



Construction continues on The Wizarding World of Harry Potter with the pathways of Universal's Islands of Adventure theme park rapidly changing. Temporary bridges and detours are being set up to allow work to proceed. Detailing construction walls are Potter-esque shields with a telling design of what's to come.

Preparing to Rock

LOCATION:
UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

■ **STATUS:**
UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The Hollywood Rip, Ride, Rockit roller coaster is in its infancy, as construction walls have just recently gone up near Jimmy Neutron's Nicktoon Blast. The coaster will ultimately fly through the park and out over CityWalk.



Unicorn Flies No More

LOCATION: ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE

■ **STATUS:**
CLOSED

The Flying Unicorn roller coaster has taken its last flight. The popular children's ride has shut down to make way for bigger and better things as part of the upcoming Wizarding World of Harry Potter land.



A Mountain Grows

LOCATION: DOWNTOWN DISNEY

T-Rex, the upcoming new dinosaur-themed restaurant at Downtown Disney, has really taken shape. Large snowy peaks are being hand-painted by a team of artists while work continues behind construction walls. There are no signs of any dinosaurs yet.

■ STATUS:
UNDER CONSTRUCTION



A Storm's a-brewin'

LOCATION: EPCOT

StormStruck: A Tale of Two Homes will premiere inside Epcot's Innoventions later this summer. While hurricane season has been fairly quiet for the past couple of years, this attraction will simulate a natural disaster every day of the week. Construction walls are up, for now.

■ STATUS:
COMPLETE



A New Path

■ STATUS:
UNDER CONSTRUCTION

LOCATION: CONTEMPORARY RESORT

A winding walkway connecting the old Contemporary A-frame building to the new C-shaped still-to-be-officially-named building is beginning to take shape. This walkway will be enclosed and rumors suggest that it will be for use by hotel guests only.

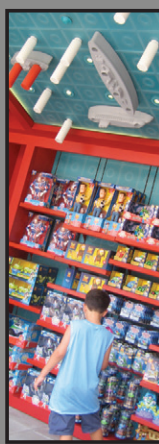


Pixar Place

■ STATUS:
COMPLETE

LOCATION: DISNEY'S HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

Toys have taken over the area opposite Toy Story Midway Mania within the new Pixar Place area of Disney's Hollywood Studios. Here guests will find shopping, quick service snacks, and a Pixar character meet & greet.



Still Spinning

LOCATION: MAGIC KINGDOM

The Carousel of Progress is a classic Disney attraction dating back to the days of Walt Disney himself. There are always rumors floating around pointing to its closure, yet it still regularly receives aesthetic updates. The most recent example came in the form of two new retro signs posted outside the circular, spinning theater.

■ STATUS:
ALWAYS AROUND



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"Work in Progress"
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CURRENT MATCH-UP

DISNEY'S HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS VS. UNIVERSAL STUDIOS ORLANDO

SIDWALK ICONS

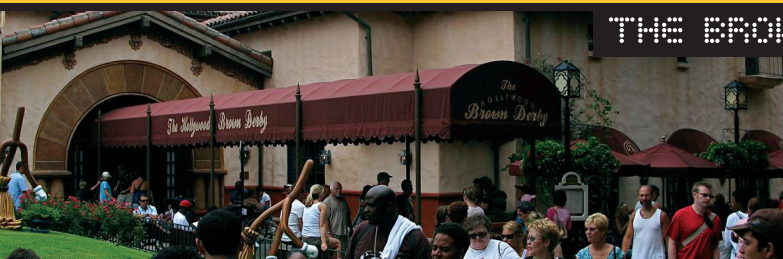


WINNER: Disney has hand and foot prints of real and fictional celebrities.

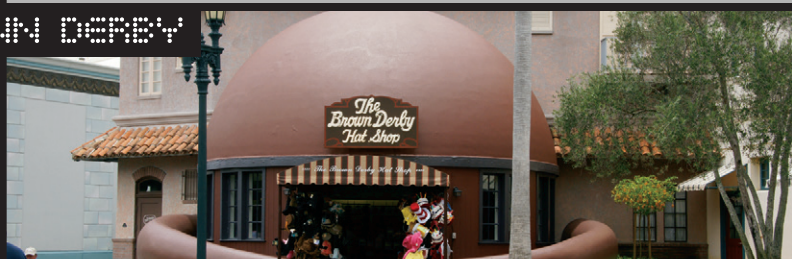


Universal's version of the Walk of Fame doesn't let you size up celebrity footprints.

THE BROWN DERBY



WINNER: The Brown Derby remains a great restaurant in Walt Disney World.

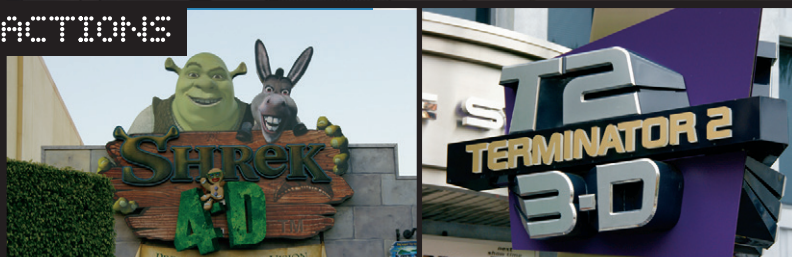


The Brown Derby serves headwear instead of food. I'll have one fedora to go, please.

3D ATTRACTIONS



TOSS-UP: MuppetVision 3D and Toy Story Mania bring out the kid in us all.



TOSS-UP: Shrek and Arnold bring out the teen in us all. Hasta la vista, Mickey.

PLAYGROUNDS



The Honey, I Shrunk the Kids Movie Set Adventure needs to be enlarged.

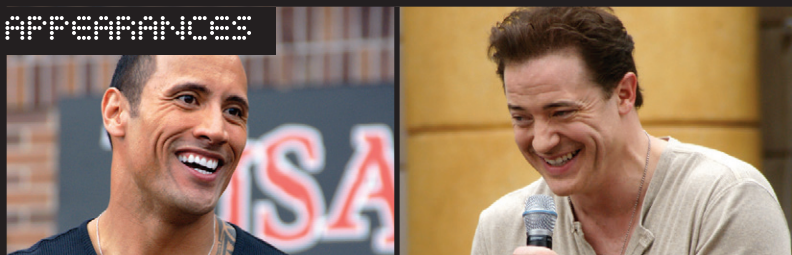


WINNER: Curious George Goes to Town is like a water park within a theme park.

CELEBRITY APPEARANCES



Disney draws the same Star Wars and ABC soap opera stars year after year.



WINNER: Universal brings in big names like Brendan Fraser and The Rock.

WHERE'S TREND TRACKER? We've replaced Trend Tracker with Versus as a regular section. We often find comparisons between various attractions and wanted to share them with you. Let us know what you think about Versus by emailing us at info@attractionsmagazine.com. Send your Versus ideas there too!

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Photo Finds

Orlando is always filled with fun things to see and our photographers are there to capture it all.

View our online gallery for more photos of these events.



Actor Brendan Fraser made a public appearance in front of The Revenge of The Mummy attraction at Universal Studios on July 11 to help promote the new third installment of The Mummy series of movies entitled, *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor*.



Captain Sig Hansen (center), star of the Discovery Channel reality series "The Deadliest Catch," and his brothers, Deckhand Norman Hansen (left) and Deck Boss Edgar Hansen (right) met with fans July 10 to 13 in the Norway pavilion in Epcot. Based in Seattle, Wash., Hansen is a fourth-generation Norwegian fisherman.



Another Star Wars Weekends has come and gone at Disney's Hollywood Studios. Held every weekend in June, the focus of this year's talks was the upcoming Star Wars: The Clone Wars animated movie. Also new this year were Stormtrooper Donald, Darth Goofy and Leia Minnie.



The time-traveling train and DeLorean from Back To The Future are back on display at Universal Studios. They were taken away as the Back To The Future Ride was changed to The Simpsons Ride, but can now be found on 7th Avenue, just down a side street from The Revenge of The Mummy ride.



An attraction based on the second film in **The Chronicles of Narnia** series, **Prince Caspian**, officially opened recently at Disney's Hollywood Studios. In attendance at the opening were Prince Caspian, who rode in on horseback, and actor Warwick Davis, who plays Nikabrik in the film.

The Chapeau shop in the Magic Kingdom recently added the ability to **create your own custom Mickey Mouse ears**. Choose your beanie, ears (matching or not), custom stickers and add your name.



The Orange County Regional History Center recently unveiled a new permanent exhibit, **"Destination Florida: Tourism Before Disney,"** which focuses on the people who moved here from the 1870s to the 1970s. It features a lot of the local attractions such as Silver Springs, Gatorland, Weeki Wachee, Cypress Gardens, Bok Sanctuary and more.



Fourth of July fireworks explode above the **Downtown Disney lake**. America's birthday was celebrated at almost all of the Orlando-area theme parks with a fireworks show.

The **7th annual Face and Body Art International Convention** was held from May 21 to 25 at the Doubletree hotel across from Universal Studios. Artists from all over the world attended and gave demonstrations. Classes were held, supplies were sold and a competition ended the convention.



Nighttime Activities at the Orlando Parks

by Linda Gedert Stromatt photos by Matt Roseboom

THE PARTY'S JUST GETTING STARTED AS NIGHT FALLS ON ORLANDO

Walt Disney World Resort

Walt Disney World has many nighttime entertainment options including several at three of its theme parks: Magic Kingdom, Epcot, and Disney's Hollywood Studios.

MAGIC KINGDOM

Wishes Nighttime Spectacular is a beautiful nightly (almost) kaleidoscope of color. It's so much more than a fireworks display set to music. You'll see Tinkerbell magically flying from Cinderella Castle to Tomorrowland. The castle is bathed in majestic light, and the entire show is truly magical and emotional. Wishes debuted in 2003 and replaced Fantasy in the Sky.

Good viewing locations are available along Main Street and at the train station. Guests who are positioned too close to the castle may strain their necks looking

up during the show. The fireworks can be seen from just about anywhere in the park, but you must be able to see the front of the castle for the full show.

SpectroMagic is a glittering and colorful nighttime parade with lots of Disney characters. Jennifer Frost, an Ohio resident, experienced Wishes and SpectroMagic for the first time during a recent trip to Disney World with her family. "I tell everybody about the SpectroMagic parade and Wishes," said Frost. "I loved it. I thought it was amazing. The fireworks were awesome, and I was really surprised by how many characters were in the parade."

The parade travels the same route as

the daytime parade, so check a park map. Visitors line up early to get a good seat. It is only on certain nights, so be sure to check in advance to avoid disappointment. When the parade is performed twice on busy nights, the second showing is much less crowded than the first.

EPCOT

Illuminations: Reflections of Earth is a nightly production featuring fireworks, music, laser lights, torch flames and fountains. The centerpiece of the show is a special Earth globe with continents that are LED displays. The show leaves



The Magic Kingdom streets light up with SpectroMagic.



The Wishes fireworks show illuminates the night sky.



Illuminations: Reflections of Earth

viewers feeling proud to be citizens of the world. Illuminations has been shown in various formats since 1988, when it replaced Epcot's laser light show.

Visitors line up around the World Showcase lagoon, and it is worthwhile to find a good viewing spot early. Be sure to avoid trees and islands that may obstruct the view of the center of the lagoon. After the show, listen for the inspirational chant from the Millennial Celebration.

DISNEY'S HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

Fantasmic is the nightly "good vs. evil" drama starring Mickey Mouse. The show includes music, water effects, fire effects, film clips, fireworks, and boatloads of Disney characters.

Margie Colvin of Ill. commented, "The show was incredible. My favorite part was clips from Disney films displayed on water screens. I've never seen anything like that before."

Because Fantasmic is so popular, visitors arrive up to an hour or more before the show starts. Guests may bring food into the amphitheater, and many enjoy an impromptu picnic while waiting for the show. Concession stands and restrooms are close by. Disney also offers a Fantasmic dinner package, which is a great way to reduce waiting time for the show. Simply make an advance dining reservation to eat at one of the participating Hollywood Studios restaurants. At dinner, you'll receive a pass for the Fantasmic show, along with a notation of a special entrance to use. Visitors using the package should plan to arrive for Fantasmic approximately 30 minutes before the show.

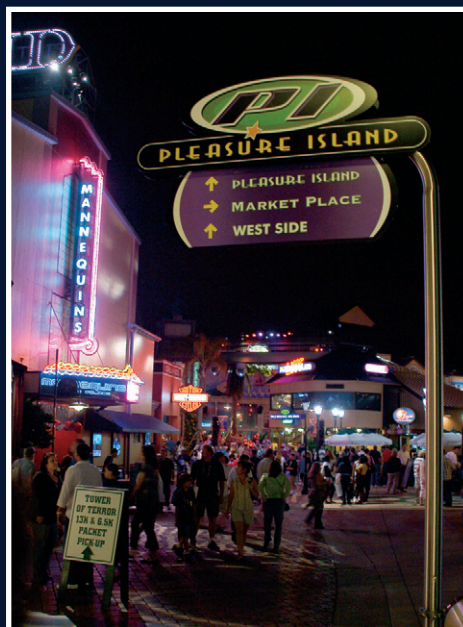
DOWNTOWN DISNEY MARKETPLACE

This area is the most popular for families, with its Lego play area, giant

Lego displays, interactive fountains, and a marina with boat rentals. Also extremely popular is the original Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique inside the World of Disney store. Snacks and sit-down restaurants are both widely available.

PLEASURE ISLAND

Pleasure Island is geared to the "over 21" crowd. It's a bright and colorful Disney version of Chicago's Rush Street or New Orleans' Bourbon Street. Entertainment includes an Irish pub, comedy club, dance clubs and more. Admission is charged



Pleasure Island draws a crowd.



The finale of Fantasmic unites favorite Disney characters.



Downtown Disney Marketplace at night.

for the clubs.

Nightlife at Pleasure Island will soon face a dramatic change as the six clubs located within its walls are scheduled to permanently close on September 27. For more information on PI's closings, turn to page 48 of this issue.

DOWNTOWN DISNEY WEST SIDE

The West Side is the newest part of Downtown Disney, with a variety of dining, shopping and entertainment options. It is home to Cirque du Soleil's "La Nouba", an AMC movie theater, and DisneyQuest – a five-story complex of arcade games and virtual rides.

Marcy Nelson, a Florida resident and former Disney cast member, said her family's absolute favorite thing to do at night is see "La Nouba". She describes it as a "high-energy, amazing show with continuous action." She said they've seen it three or four times, and her whole family loves it, including her two young sons. "It doesn't get boring. The performers make it different every time."

Also, all the seats are good, according to Nelson, as there's so much to see.



Downtown Disney's West Side is full of life at night.

DISNEY'S BOARDWALK

Disney's Boardwalk is located in the Epcot resort area, and it offers dining, entertainment and shopping. The carnival atmosphere at the Boardwalk recalls the Atlantic seaside towns of the early 1900s. Most say strolling along the lake and watching the street performers is fun and relaxing.

Jugglers, magicians and others entertain the crowds. Visitors also enjoy midway games, surrey bikes and boat rentals at the nearby marina.

The Boardwalk is home to ESPN Club, and other restaurant choices for Mediterranean, seafood, and pub fare. "Over 21" establishments include a dance hall and dueling piano bar. Along the Boardwalk, visitors enjoy browsing at the various shops, offering everything from the upscale (Wyland Galleries) to the everyday (Screen Door General Store).

Take a water taxi from Hollywood Studios or the "back door" entrance of Epcot for a relaxing ride to the Boardwalk. Also, keep your eyes on the skies for a glimpse of the fireworks from Epcot.

Universal Orlando Resort

Universal Orlando offers nighttime entertainment year-round at CityWalk and seasonally at Universal Studios.

UNIVERSAL CITYWALK

Universal's CityWalk features many unique dining and entertainment options. One of the newest and most exciting offerings is the Blue Man Group. A unique musical stage show featuring just what you'd expect: three blue men.

CityWalk also includes themed restaurants such as Bubba Gump Shrimp Co., Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville, Hard Rock Cafe, Nascar Sports Grille, and NBA City. In addition to dining, CityWalk has many fun shopping opportunities and night clubs to dance the night away.



CityWalk's clubs and stores stay open for late-night entertainment.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

During the summer and holiday seasons, Universal Studios hosts **Universal 360: A Cinesphere Spectacular**. This show debuted in the summer of 2006, and it features four huge globes floating in the lagoon. Each globe becomes a video display, highlighting clips from more than 100 Universal films. Music, lasers, explosions and fireworks complete the effect.

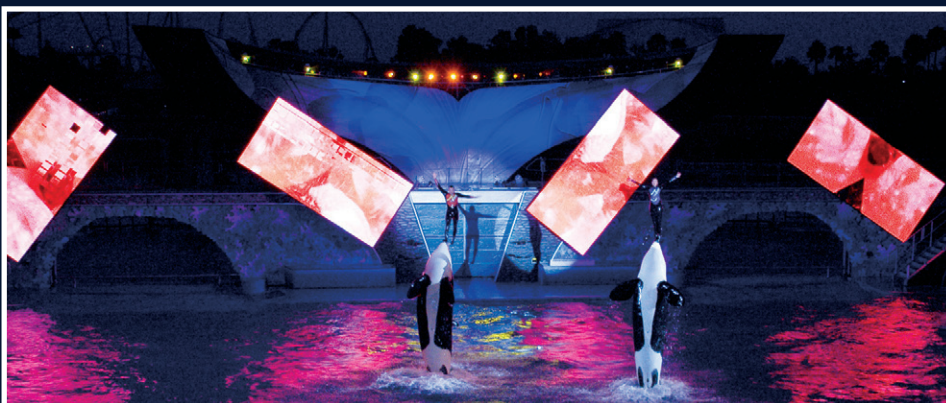
Because the four spheres display identical images, good viewing spots are available at many different spots.



Universal 360 explodes in the sky.

SeaWorld Orlando

SeaWorld Orlando offers nighttime entertainment during the busier seasons of the year.



No other water show packs the same level of energy as Shamu Rocks.

SeaWorld is open late in the summer and holiday seasons, and it has special nighttime entertainment at those times.

Its evening show is called *Mistify*, and it encompasses the sea and sky. The show is performed on SeaWorld's center lake and has water effects, flames and fireworks. Several restaurants offer lakeside seating, creating a perfect dining and entertainment experience.

Shamu the whale has his own special nighttime "rock 'n roll" show, *Shamu*

Rocks. The show features music, lights, and of course, Shamu. This show is a totally different experience than Shamu's daytime show *Believe*.

New this year is *Bayside Ski Jam* – an all-new nighttime, lakeside celebration where skiing meets soaring. Imagine walking into Bayside Stadium and being drawn into a concert where the performers are skiers and the water's the stage. Stunt kites towed by fast-moving wave runners perform incredible maneuvers to a backdrop of fireworks in the sky.

WDW Newsletter



Daily Disney News & Trip Planning Information

wdwnewsletter.com

Surviving Lines

By Kimberly Button Photos by Ricky Brigante & Matt Roseboom

TOP 10 TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING YOUR THEME PARK HOURS

Millions of people journey to Orlando every year to experience some of the best theme parks in the world. Along with the multitude of visitors, though, comes one of the biggest complaints - how much time is wasted

standing in lines. When you want to spend more of your day enjoying the attractions instead of idly standing in hour-long queue lines, keep the following tips in mind to get the most value out of your attraction ticket.



Guide Maps

10

When you enter the theme park, be sure to pick up a current guide map as well as any entertainment schedules. These are essential so that you'll know when stage shows and parades will be held, what attractions are currently closed, and the operating hours of attractions and restaurants, which may be different from the regular operating hours.

9

Child Swap

If you are traveling with small children, don't let their inability to ride an attraction deter the adults from enjoying the thrill rides of the park. Child swap options are often available for thrill rides and allow one adult to stay with the kids while the other rides the attraction. When the adults switch places, there is no need to wait in an additional line as the second adult will be immediately boarded onto the attraction. Be sure to ask staff members what your options are before entering the queue because you may be given special instructions or they may be able to handle special requests.



Some child swap rooms, like this one at The Simpsons Ride, feature unique details and most offer an air-conditioned place to sit down.



"Chicken Exit"

8

If only some members of your party want to experience an attraction but your party doesn't want to split up while waiting in line, keep in mind that a majority of theme park attractions have exits near the boarding areas. For instance, a guest can stay in the queue line and enjoy the pre-show of The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror at Disney's Hollywood Studios and still be able to exit before guests board the elevators of the attraction. All of the thrill attractions have "chicken exits" and many of the tamer attractions have exits as well. If you plan on staying in the queue line and not boarding the attraction, though, be sure to double check with a staff member before entering to confirm an exit is available and where it is located.

7

Avoid Parade Routes

Do not go to an attraction that is located near a parade viewing site after the parade is over. With such a large amount of people suddenly converging on one attraction after a parade because it is close by, these "parade dumps" make queue lines swell and can add 20 minutes or more to your wait time. Your best bet is to head to an attraction in a section of the park away from the parade route, or stop and get a bite to eat and let the queue lines dwindle.



Plan For Rain

Central Florida is known for its afternoon showers that appear out of nowhere, drench theme park guests, and then disappear quickly. If you do not want to be caught in the rain while waiting in an outside queue line or while riding an outdoor attraction, plan to visit indoor attractions or those with cover in the mid-afternoon. This game plan will also protect you from the Florida heat and humidity which peaks in the afternoon and wilts theme park guests. Of course, if you don't mind getting wet or if you have a good poncho, these can be some of the fastest times to ride.

5

Easy Parade Viewing

Think the only way to enjoy a theme park's parade is to line up an hour beforehand to get a good viewing spot? Not necessarily. Because the parades travel down major guest thoroughfares which become blocked off, crosswalks must be set up to allow for the flow of traffic. However, even these crosswalks get roped off before parade time. Ask the staff patrolling the area when they will allow guests to stand in the crosswalk sections and you could still get a front row seat without a long wait. The areas at parade step off and step down (where the parade actually enters and exits the park) are also little known areas where fewer guests congregate.



The Magic Kingdom parade route passes near the Main Street Barber Shop, which usually makes for an excellent crowd-free viewing spot.



Wait time information stations are generally located near a crossroads or central hub of a theme park, where most destination decisions are made.

Wait Times

Find the wait times of the attractions you want to visit as soon as you enter the park. For the parks that have them, the guest information boards are an invaluable source of information for the wait times. The board lists the wait times of attractions as well as updates on any closings. With this information, you can make preliminary decisions on what to do for your first hour in the park and enlist the help of the information board employees for their expert knowledge of how to navigate the park. Wait times are also usually prominently displayed outside of each attraction. The posted times are often padded by five to 10 minutes in case the wait is longer than predicted but they may also be longer than listed.

4

3

Get Up Early, Take a Break

The best times to experience the most popular attractions, especially the thrill rides, are first thing in the morning, later in the evening and during parade and fireworks times. If you can, arrive early at a theme park, leave the park and take a break during the afternoon, and then return later in the evening to avoid lengthy lines.



Early December is a great time to visit. You'll avoid the crowds and find many empty streets, (like in SeaWorld, above), all decked out for the holidays.

Off-Season Trips

2

If you're able, choose to visit Orlando during a slower time of the year. The parks and tourist areas are, for the most part, crowded whenever schools are out. The busiest time is summer, June to August, followed by spring break March to April. Then there's the holiday times, with the week after Christmas being the busiest week of the year. So obviously, the best times to visit are in the fall after school has started, the weeks leading up to Christmas, and January, February and May.

1

Skip The Lines!

The best way to avoid long lines is to use Disney's free Fastpass system or purchase a Universal Express Plus Pass.

Using Universal's Express Plus Pass system (pictured right) requires an additional fee but there's no waiting before being able to ride another attraction.

Disney's Fastpass system (Fastpass machine pictured below) is free to all guests, however, not every attraction utilizes Fastpass and you must wait a certain amount of time before receiving another Fastpass ticket for an additional attraction.

Both options are ideal when you are visiting the theme parks during peak seasons such as summer or around a holiday.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kimberly Button is the author of "The Disney Queue Line Survival Guidebook," the only guidebook with fun activities tailored to each attraction queue line at Walt Disney World's four theme parks.

Visit www.disneysurvivalguide.com to read an excerpt, purchase the book or e-book, and sign up for a monthly newsletter featuring Disney-themed activities.

NFFC the Disney Fan Club that introduces you to the makers of the magic.



NFFC Florida's Adventurers Convention and Show & Sale will be held at:

Regal Sun Resort (formally Grosvenor) 1850 Hotel Plaza Blvd

For special convention hotel rate call 1-800-624-4109 ask for the National Fantasy Fan Club rate.

Registration and current information can be found at NFFC website: www.nffc.org

Speakers and VIP's

Doreen Tracey (Original Mouseketeer)
Phil Holms (VP of the Magic Kingdom)
Jim MacPhee (VP of EPCOT)
Pamela Shaw (Celebration Historian)
Mary Ann Lunde (former WDW Ambassador)
Bill Sullivan (former VP of the Magic Kingdom)
Bob Matheison (Retired VP of Parks)
Tom Nabbe (Disney Legend)
Ike Eisemann (Witch Mountain)
Mickey and Minnie Mouse.

The NFFC is an international club with more than 30 chapters around the world. The NFFC has held 24 annual national conventions in Anaheim, Calif., and is holding its third annual Florida convention and show and sale to coincide with Walt Disney World's anniversary.



All events, times and guest appearances are subject to change. Check www.NFFC.org for updates.

Friday October 3rd: The adventure begins with special backstage tours unlike any tour you have been on in the past; transportation from Regal Sun Resort will be provided. Adventurers will end the evening by dining with a VIP at the "Part Of Their World" dinner.

Saturday October 4th: A full day of informative and entertaining Disney-related seminars and a special tribute to Ralph Kent featuring some of his private collection and art work. Also on Saturday is the annual "Lunch with a Legend" where NFFC will induct new Florida legends. A private dinner party at Disney's Adventurers Club at Pleasure Island caps off the day.

Sunday October 5th: Show and Sale. Collectors and dealers will have their Disney memorabilia on sale. Adventurers will be admitted one hour earlier than the general public.

Vendor tables available now.

TAKE TO THE SKIES

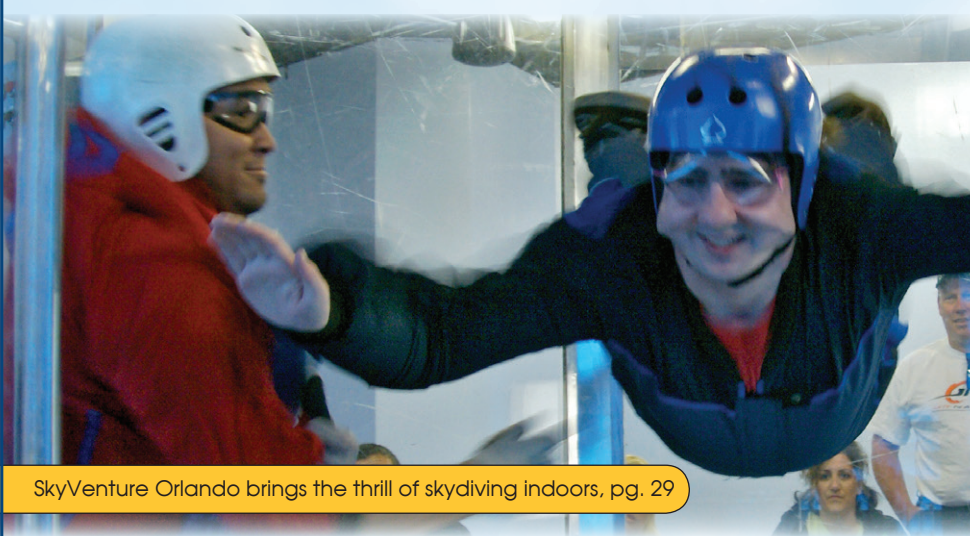
ORLANDO MAKES THE WORLD OF FLIGHT ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

By Ricky Brigante

Photography by Ricky Brigante & Matt Roseboom



Warbird Adventures lets beginners actually pilot real airplanes, pg. 25



SkyVenture Orlando brings the thrill of skydiving indoors, pg. 29



Soarin' at Epcot sends guests virtually hang gliding over California, pg. 32

In the world of flight, there exist two distinct types of people: those who fly and those who are merely passengers. The vast majority of people never make it beyond the passenger role. Despite this, many still dream of soaring through the skies under their own control.

The barrier to entry is steep. Earning a pilot's license requires thousands of dollars' worth of flight school and plenty of time and practice, and even a bit of bravery. For those in search of complete freedom in the skies, skydiving is the ultimate flight option, though many see it as a potentially life-threatening one.

Fortunately, for those whose feelings lie somewhere between longing to fly and actually taking the time (and money) to do it, there exists a place where dreams come true: the city of Orlando. While Orlando is best known for being the home of some of the world's greatest theme parks, it also features a wealth of flight-encouraging attractions. From simulators to actual take-to-the-skies flight, Orlando has an option for the flight enthusiast in everyone.

WARBIRD ADVENTURES

Imagine skipping flight school and jumping straight into the cockpit of an airplane, taking the controls, flying in formation with nearby aircraft, and performing amazing aerobatics, all with no prior training or experience. It sounds like a fantasy, but a 10-year-old Orlando company called Warbird Adventures has been making that fantasy a reality for guests every day.

Located at the Kissimmee Gateway Airport, about 20 minutes southeast of Walt Disney World, Warbird Adventures offers ordinary guests the opportunity to literally fly an airplane. This is no simulation and there is no trickery used. Guests are able, and encouraged to actually command the pitch, yaw and roll of a real airplane. As if that weren't enough of a thrilling experience, the airplanes used are fully restored T-6/SNJ aircraft from World War II, originally manufactured in 1945, and formerly used for military flight training, hence the "Warbird" part of the company's name.

Heading into the air at Warbird Adventures allows guests to safely experience everything there is to enjoy about flying without having any formal flight training or even any knowledge of how a plane operates.

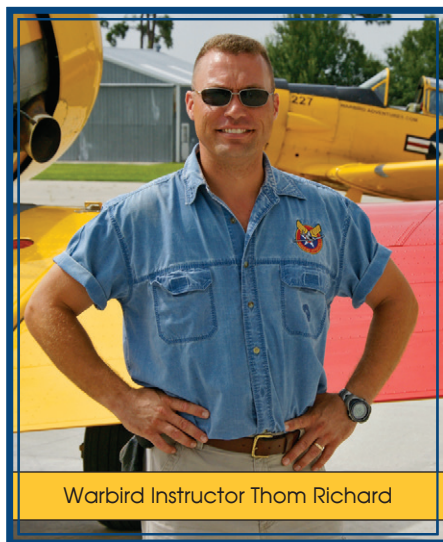
ARRIVAL FOR DEPARTURE

The experience begins upon arriving at Warbird Adventures, a discreetly placed building alongside the airport runways, complete with its own hangar. Reservations are recommended, though not required. There are a number of flight options guests may choose from, the most basic of which is the flight duration. Guests can opt for 15-, 30-, or 60-minute flights. Each includes a spot in the front seat of the plane, piloting for the majority of the time in the air.



One of Warbird's three T-6/SNJ aircraft parked in front of their hangar / museum.

My guide to first-time-flying was chief instructor pilot and co-owner of Warbird Adventures, Thom Richard who succinctly summarized the Warbird experience, "We take people up in these vintage aircraft, teach 'em how to turn upside down and show 'em a good time."



Warbird Instructor Thom Richard

Richard is exactly what you would expect of a flight instructor whose daily routine involves maintaining and flying former military aircraft. He is extremely friendly but also speaks quickly and matter-of-factly, a skill required in order to convey clear instructions to guests as they take the controls of an airplane for the first time.

Richard and his team of five pilots also possess the uncanny ability to make piloting a 1945 aircraft sound like it's nothing more than riding a bike. In reality, Richard told us that the opportunity to fly these historic aircraft is actually rather unique. "We are the biggest T-6 flight school where you can walk in any day of the week and hop into one of these. It's very unusual. ... Orlando is very unique for the number of people we have coming through here, so I don't think you can do what we do anywhere else." Another company (Stallion 51, found online at stallion51.com) operates a competing business from the Kissimmee Gateway Airport, though their focus is on flying with TF-51s and P-51 D Mustangs.

Any nervousness or paranoia I had about strapping into a decades-old aircraft piloted by someone I had not previously met (or even seen pilot a plane) immediately left me upon stepping into Warbird's facility. My expectations of finding the airline equivalent of an auto mechanic's greasy shop, where oil leaks over the floor and tools lay strewn about randomly, were quickly replaced by an immaculately clean workspace to the point where the ground actually glared at me from being almost too clean.

THE PRICE OF FLYING

At a time when gas prices are constantly rising and commercial airlines are charging passengers a premium to check their bags, running an airplane-based business is tough. Thom Richard told us that Warbird Adventures has had to recently make some business adjustments, "We burn a lot (of fuel) and we've had to raise our prices accordingly. We don't have a choice but to pass it on. But being such a unique opportunity, people still come and do it. It's just not something that's commonplace."

Taking your own journey into the air costs \$220 for 15 minutes, \$390 for 30 minutes, and \$670 for 60 minutes. The aerobatics option is \$35 extra, but is included in the 60-minute flight.

There is nothing amateur about Warbird's operation and certainly nothing to fear about flying with them. Richard explained their maintenance routine, "We try to keep [the aircraft] as nice as we can ... which requires a fair amount of maintenance. We do everything on-site here and people are welcome to walk around, see what we do and how we maintain the aircraft and do the restorations inside the hangar on a daily basis. We try to



Thom Richard taxis to the runway from the rear seat while I enjoy the view up front.

keep them running as smoothly as possible." Warbird has even earned a place in aviation history, "We were the first civilian aircraft to fly over a major sporting event since 9/11 when we did the Super Bowl flyover in Jacksonville."

"If I, for any reason, yell or say, 'bail out! bail out! bail out!' then it's time to go. Don't ask any questions at that time because I just left."

FINAL BOARDING

The feeling of stepping into the front seat of a two-seat propeller-driven airplane for the first time is not something that should be understated. As someone who hadn't previously flown in any airplane smaller than

a commercial jet, climbing up onto the T-6's wing, situating myself in an open-air cockpit surrounded by dials, switches, and other controls was a little nerve-racking, but mostly exciting. Once seated, Richard, standing on the wing just outside the cockpit, helped strap me into both the airplane as well as a parachute. Once I was securely fastened, his first words of advice for me were, "If I, for any reason, yell or say, 'bail out! bail out! bail out!' then it's time to go. Don't ask any questions at that time because I just left. You're not going to have anybody to talk to." While these weren't exactly the words anyone would like to hear just before takeoff, they were a necessary precaution to ensure a safe landing, with or without the airplane. Fortunately, no bailing out was necessary.

Whenever possible, two T-6s head for the runway, and ultimately the skies, at the same time. In this case, a tourist from Spain was settling into



ON DISPLAY

Warbird Adventures is also home to a museum which they have dubbed the Kissimmee Air Museum. Located inside Warbird's hangar, the museum contains a variety of World War II-era memorabilia and weaponry, unique and interesting aircraft in various stages of repair, and even the world's only flying Aerocar, which they still take out and fly on occasion. This ultra-clean hangar is where Warbird performs regular maintenance on their aircraft.



It's not every day that you get to take off simultaneously with a nearby airplane. That is, unless you frequent Warbird Adventures.

another plane opposite ours. Richard said those interested in flying with him come from all walks of life. "When we started, we flew a lot of WWII vets. ... Now it's the younger generation that's taken over. It's the thrill seekers, history buffs, WWII buffs, modelers, pilots who want to do aerobatics and formation training, anybody and everybody." He added that almost anyone can take part in this experience. "The only prerequisite we have is that you're physically and mentally able to accept flight instruction, which is a pretty low bar. So, anybody off the street basically, we'll stick you in the front seat and show you how it's done."

The most amazing thing about flying with Warbird Adventures is the amount of actual flying their guests really do. Richard explained, "On the very first flight, we need to show you how to do the takeoff and the landing. We also need to demonstrate the formation flying initially. When we do the aerobatics, I'll do a maneuver, you follow me through on the controls, I'll explain to you what I'm doing and then I'll talk you through the same thing. Then we'll just work our way up to whatever level you're comfortable with. Beyond that you get to do everything."

CLEAR FOR TAKEOFF

Leaving the ground, thrusting into the air just a few feet away from another plane (as seen above), was



Formation flying is not only fun, but allows for once-in-a-lifetime photo opportunities.

an unforgettable experience. Within minutes after takeoff, Richard was handing the controls over to me. Whatever motions he performed from the rear seat, the controls in the front seat where I was sitting would mimic so I could follow along with his motions. Once the aircraft reached about a mile up, he had me place my feet on the two rudder pedals, my right hand on the flight stick, and from that point on I was in control of the aircraft. He told me where to go and gave step-by-step tips on how to get there, but let me do all the flying (under constant supervision).

First on the agenda was formation flying, in which my instruction was to stay just below and behind the two Warbird planes flying ahead of me. One of the planes contained the tourist from Spain, the other was simply there for formations. Years of playing



The view is spectacular from the air.

computer flight simulators had not prepared me for just how sensitive the actual airplane controls were. My initial attempts to fly directly behind



PHOTO & VIDEO

Warbird guests may opt to take home souvenirs of their flying adventure in the form of an in-flight DVD recording of the entire experience (\$50) and still photos (\$25) taken at key moments throughout the flight (like during the loop seen here – note the ground's position relative to the plane).

Inside the plane, all communication between myself and Pilot Thom Richard, who was seated directly behind me, was done via headset, allowing our entire in-flight conversation to be recorded and included with the three-camera video record of our flight. The camera angles include an interior view showing guest reactions to the flight.

You can view video highlights and more pictures of my trip to the skies with Warbird Adventures on our Web site at attractionsmagazine.com

A SAFE LANDING

Once on the ground and parked back at the Warbird Adventures hangar, I asked Richard what most guests think when they return from a flight, to which he offered a few common responses. "That was the greatest thing they've ever done." They swear up and down that there's nothing like it – the thrill of a lifetime." I wholeheartedly agree. The opportunity to safely take control of a real aircraft without any prior training and only a few brief sentences of instruction is about as unique as they come and is truly an unbeatable and unforgettable experience.

Tickets can be purchased online at warbirdadventures.com or by calling them at 407-870-7366.

two other planes usually ended up sending us far left or right of where we were supposed to be. However, the learning curve was not terribly steep and I was able to pull in behind them fairly quickly.

LOOPS AND ROLLS

Until this point, the whole experience was covered in the standard flight packages that are available from Warbird Adventures. For the more adventurous type, there is a highly recommended add-on of aerobatics. Available for \$35 extra in the 30-minute flights and included in 60-minute flights, the aerobatics option allows first-time flyers to perform tricks in the air. As Richard stated, "We'll teach you how to perform loops and rolls, all of the maneuvers you see them do at the air shows, basically. We'll have you do that in a matter of minutes."

The aerobatics began with a roll to the right, piloted by Richard while my hands were on my set of controls, following along with his every move.

Immediately after, it was my turn to take the controls and perform a similar roll to the left, pushing the flight stick as far left as it could go, pressing down with my left foot on the rudder pedal, and watching the world spin around me. All of this was only 10 minutes after the first time I had ever taken control of an airplane.

Warbird Adventures' bag of tricks includes a number of different maneuvers, including Aileron Rolls, Loops, Cuban 8's, Reverse Cuban 8's, Barrel Rolls, Immelmans, Split-S, Wingovers, Cloverleaf and Hesitation 4-point, 8-point and 16-point rolls. While not everyone can stomach all of these tricks on their first flight, Richard said that repeated trips to the sky would result in a greater tolerance, which is a fantastic built-in way to get repeat visitors. "As a matter of fact, if you come back a second time, we're going to have you try the takeoff and the landing yourself. Chances are you're not going to succeed real well, but we'll help you. We're going to have you do as much as possible."

FLIGHT TIPS

Here are a few pointers to help ensure that you don't feel queasy during your flight.

- Eat a small breakfast – Warbird Instructor Thom Richard told me that performing aerobatics on an empty stomach is a bad idea. Eat light before you fly.
- Arrive well-rested – The excitement of flying and the force of the aerobatics can tire you out quickly.
- Visit on a cool day – Old military aircraft do not have air conditioning, so the hot Florida sun will heat you up fast with no available shade until landing.
- Cover your hair – The airflow through the cockpit while flying causes long hair to get tangled and knotted. Wearing a hat or tying your hair back is highly recommended.

SKYVENTURE ORLANDO

Not all flight has to take place thousands of feet in the air. In fact, not all flight even involves aircraft.

Skydiving is an airplane-free alternative for those in search of flight. It is, of course, the act of jumping out of a perfectly good airplane and free-falling toward the Earth, with only a parachute to ease the transition.

Although there are companies near Orlando that offer true United States Parachute Association-approved skydiving experiences (the closest being Skydive Space Center at skydivespacecenter.com), most people tend to shy away from this kind of extreme activity, fearing the worst. This is where something called “indoor skydiving” comes in, offering many of the same thrills as real skydiving without any of the same risks. While skydiving isn’t necessarily right for everyone, anyone can still enjoy the thrill of skydiving by way of some closer-to-the-ground technology.

Indoor skydiving takes place inside a large, vertical wind tunnel (pictured above) that blasts 1,000-horsepower wind upwards in an enclosed area, allowing visitors to literally float on air.

In Florida, the only place you’ll find indoor skydiving is at SkyVenture Orlando, part of a chain with 15 locations worldwide. The Orlando facility was built in 1997, opened to the public in 1999, and was the first SkyVenture wind tunnel built, as their prototype and proof of concept.

Upon arriving at the SkyVenture Orlando facility, located just off International Drive near the Wet ‘n’ Wild water park, guests immediately notice the towering wind tunnel and, if the tunnel is switched on, will hear the smooth roar of wind pushing its way through.



While I personally have a long history of remaining seated while in an airplane, Kristin Zack who works in guest relations at SkyVenture



Kristin Zack, SkyVenture Guest Relations

“A lot of times people think that when you skydive you get the sensation that you’re falling, and you actually just feel like you’re floating.”

Orlando, has actually skydived over 75 times and has clocked more than 12 hours of “tunnel time.” Speaking to the similarities between being in the wind tunnel and skydiving, Zack explained, “It actually feels exactly the same, believe it or not. A lot of times people think that when you skydive you get the sensation that you’re falling, and you actually just feel like you’re floating.” In fact, nearly all of the staff at SkyVenture Orlando are regular skydivers, many more-so than Zack. “We have people here, that work here and that jump here, that have thousands and thousands of jumps.” So, when it comes to comparing real skydiving to the SkyVenture kind, I can confidently (and safely) take their word for it.

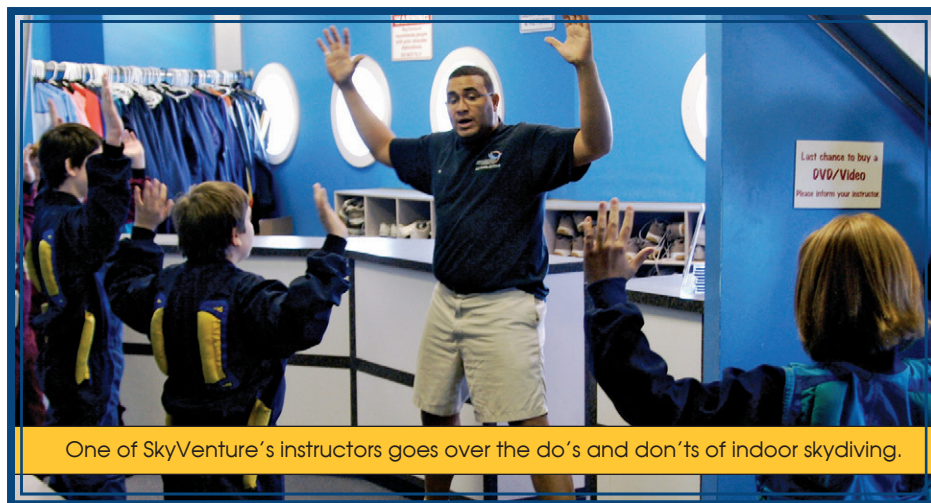
But don’t expect to jump in and immediately be performing mid-air tricks like a professional skydiver. Zack told us that while the wind tunnel is an accurate simulation of skydiving, “the learning curve is just very dramatic.” And that’s a statement that I can personally attest to.

As a safety precaution, SkyVenture Orlando requires all visitors to suit up in specially designed jumpsuits, along with kneepads, elbow pads,

goggles, and a helmet. Accompanying each guest inside the wind tunnel is a seasoned SkyVenture instructor. Ear plugs are also provided and required, as the wind tunnel generates up to 125 mph of air flow, which packs enough white noise to silence nearly any conversation. Thus, prior to entering the wind tunnel, instructors teach all visitors a sign language of sorts, specific to performing various body movements while in the air. These movements include bending your knees and extending your arms symmetrically to maintain consistent airtime and arching or straightening your back to cause you to raise and lower yourself within the tunnel.

The instructional session takes place on one floor of the wind tunnel, separate from the tunnel entrance located on a different floor. Both floors require guests to climb several flights of stairs.

The room with the wind tunnel actually contains three concentric circular areas. The outer area is not affected by the wind generated by the tunnel and allows non-participating visitors to watch the indoor skydiving in action. The middle and interior



One of SkyVenture's instructors goes over the do's and don'ts of indoor skydiving.

layers are located within doors that are airtight and sealed while the wind tunnel is turned on. The act of enabling and disabling the wind tunnel is something out of a science-fiction movie, somewhat akin to a space traveler passing through an airlock. Flashing lights shine as the doors are locked and the wind tunnel is engaged.

The innermost area is the wind tunnel itself, where the indoor skydiving actually takes place. This area has two open doorways to the middle area, allowing guests and instructors to easily pass into and out

of the airstream. Entering the flowing air is a unique experience unto itself, as gravity completely disappears once a foot, or any body part, makes its way into the tunnel.

Visitors are suited up and enter the tunnel area in groups, each taking turns inside the tunnel itself. For inexperienced indoor skydivers, only one person is allowed in the tunnel at a time along with one of SkyVenture's instructors.

Once inside the vertical tunnel, you might think that floating on air would be similar to swimming in a pool, allowing for slow, graceful



SKYDIVING FOR ALL

SkyVenture Orlando's Kristin Zack told us that leaping into the wind tunnel is definitely not just for thrill seekers but a wide audience, which includes "first-time flyers, young and old. We fly ages 3 and up. We get a lot of families in here too that also enjoy it."

In fact, Zack told us that SkyVenture Orlando has become a regular gathering spot for all kinds of occasions, "We do get individual families, but we also have a lot of parties, corporate events, private parties."

As a testament to SkyVenture's realistic replication of the skydiving experience, seasoned skydivers

even use their wind tunnel to practice more advanced moves.

"A lot of skydivers come for competitive skydiving," said Zack. "They have to practice in a wind tunnel in order to be good at competitive skydiving. So, people from all over come to SkyVenture to practice – there's no way of placing in the top 10 without training here. But it's also good for people who just want to improve their skills – that's how I started here – I was a skydiver and I was just not that good and it definitely helped improve. Anything you do in the tunnel, you can do in free fall skydiving."

movements. Slow and graceful are about as far from a description of my performance in the wind tunnel as you can get. It is very important to listen to the instructor while he or she initially teaches the hand gestures, because once you're inside the wind tunnel, even the simple act of floating in place is extremely difficult for first-time indoor skydivers if you're not able to respond to or even understand the instructor's hand-signalled recommendations on how to contort your body into a more appropriate position.

Instead of floating gracefully on a cushion of air, I felt more like I was rumbling from side to side, often gliding near the walls of the wind tunnel, and occasionally falling to the bouncy mesh floor beneath me. Again, this is almost entirely due to the fact that I hadn't a clue what the multitude of hand signals I was being given mid-flight meant, since I didn't pay close enough attention during the earlier instructional session.

In an average flight, each guest gets two turns in the wind tunnel, the length of which generally varies between one and two minutes depending on which flight package was purchased. While one or two minutes sounds short, indoor skydiving is actually surprisingly tiring, as you're constantly fighting against the strong airflow to maintain your balance. More than a couple of minutes in the tunnel would surely wear any first-timer out. In my second attempt, I was able to successfully navigate the air much more fluidly than the first, as I had watched others carefully to learn the hand gestures I had previously missed.

Once you get the hang of raising and lowering yourself as well as floating in place, the experience of indoor skydiving is a fantastic one. It's a unique and exhilarating feeling to watch everyone around you ordinarily standing on the ground,



I eventually was able to float in place.

confined by the forces of gravity, while you have the luxury of floating just a few feet away. I have often dreamed of skydiving, though never got up the nerve to actually go through with it, and if floating in SkyVenture's wind tunnel is really what skydiving feels like, I see no reason to ever really leap out of an airplane.

At the end of each visitor's second time in the wind tunnel, almost as a going-away present, SkyVenture instructors grab hold of the handles on the floating guest's jumpsuit and take them for a twirling ride up and down the height of the tunnel. It's a

bonus that really puts the icing on the cake. Finally, once everyone has had their chance to fly, instructors take a few moments to perform some amazing advanced solo tricks in the air, essentially showing everyone what is possible with enough practice.

Regardless of the skill level inside the wind tunnel, the reaction from guests is generally unanimously positive. Kristin Zack informed us that "a lot of times when people come to Florida, they say this is hands-down the best thing that they ever do." When it comes to unique flying experiences, visiting SkyVenture Orlando to have the opportunity to safely take to the air without the use of an aircraft or even a parachute should definitely be on all Orlando visitors' to-do list.

SkyVentureOrlando flight packages range from \$45 to \$100 per person, depending on the flight lengths and additional options. Special packages can also be purchased for groups or enthusiasts for an additional cost, allowing more time in the tunnel. DVD flight recordings and photo CDs are also available in most packages.

You can watch a video of the Orlando Attractions Magazine staff, including myself, floating in the SkyVenture wind tunnel at attractionsmagazine.com.



The final instructor-assisted ride to the top of the tunnel is a SkyVenture highlight.

SOARIN' AT EPCOT

Not every incredible flying experience in Orlando involves physical activity. Sometimes a state-of-the-art, award-winning flight experience is all thrill-seekers need to enjoy the sensation of soaring over beautiful views.

Walt Disney Imagineering's endeavor into the world of flying comes in the form of an attraction at Walt Disney World's Epcot known as Soarin'. In this attraction, guests climb aboard rows of seats and are swiftly taken on a smooth virtual hang gliding journey over the sights of California.

Soarin' made its mark on the motion simulator world when it first opened in 2001 at Disney's California Adventure theme park in Anaheim, Calif. where it's known as Soarin' Over California. It quickly won a Themed Entertainment Association (THEA) award as Best Attraction in 2002. Ultimately, the attraction was duplicated at Epcot as Soarin' in 2006.

The premise of the attraction is that guests step into an ultra-modern airport, about to embark on a sight-seeing tour of The Golden State. While real-life hang gliding is possible to find in Orlando (one such example is at Wallaby Ranch - wallabyranch.com), the virtual kind is much more universally appealing. Guests simply enter the motion simulator theater, which at first glance is inconspicuously designed, with nothing more than a large screen lit in a bright blue color visible towering above a few rows of seating. Disney cast members direct guests to take a seat, stow all loose items in the pouch underneath them, and buckle in for the ride.

The rows of seats swiftly take off, elevating to heights up to 40 feet off the ground. Just as each seat reaches its pinnacle, the giant screen is filled with an 80-foot-tall film projection,



Guests' feet dangle as they virtually fly over the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.

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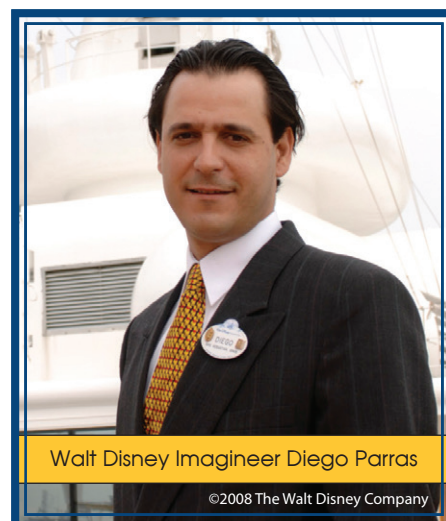
"The sensation of flight and space – it goes back to Walt. He definitely had a love and passion for that topic and that theme."

immediately transporting viewers from a theater in Orlando to flying high over vast scenery throughout the state of California.

Throughout the experience, guests fly over familiar California scenery, including San Francisco, Los Angeles, Napa Valley, San Diego and Palm Springs.

One particularly unique destination is found in the normally protected airspace over Yosemite National Park. Since flight of any kind into Yosemite has not been allowed since the mid-1900s, the attraction's film crew had to obtain special permission to shoot there, likely making riding Soarin' the only way anyone will be able to see the national park from directly overhead.

While Soarin' may be a fairly new attraction, the idea of creating a Disney experience based on the world of flight is definitely not new. "The sensation



Walt Disney Imagineer Diego Parras

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of flight and space – it goes back to Walt," said Walt Disney Imagineer Diego Parras. "He definitely had a love and passion for that topic and that theme."

In Walt's days, it was not yet possible to create the mechanics that make Soarin' a successful simulation of flight. Parras emphasized the importance of technology and realism in Disney's attractions, "When you really look at the history of the company, one of the things that, since the days of Walt, has always been our mission, is to create realistic immersive environments for our guests to be able to experience. Sometimes they can be very challenging because the

technology might not exist for us to be able to do such things and that's where we have our own research and development department within Walt Disney Imagineering."

In the end, however, the technology in Soarin', like every Disney attraction, is designed to blend into the background behind the experience. "Even though we're always coming up with new technologies," Parras said, "the main focus should be that it's an experience that we're creating for our guests, and really the technology – you shouldn't be able to see it."

It took a talented group of Imagineers to successfully replicate the experience of hang gliding in a projection-based theater environment. "When they filmed it, they shot it on high-definition.

The projectors [in the attraction] are running at 48 frames per second, which is twice the speed of what we would consider your traditional motion pictures, and a lot of the movements and everything has to completely come in-synch to give you that feeling that you are actually

hang gliding." Parras said. "There were actual techniques that our audio and visual department (Theme Park Productions) had to use to be able to give you that feeling that you would be hang gliding."



Soarin' is inside The Land, a pavilion devoted to the Earth.

So what brings Soarin' to new heights, separating it from other motion simulators? Parras explained the importance of combining all of the different show elements. "Not only do you have that physical sensation of hang gliding over the state of California, but you're completely

immersed with this great visual effect that you have right in front of you that, as it's completely synched, it truly gives you that feel that you are hang gliding – and then, on top of that, we also have scents that compliment those scenes as you're actually flying through them."

The scents Parras referred to are instantly recognizable but still-subtle smells piped into the theater and across viewers' noses via air that continuously blows like a cool California breeze. The scents range from orange groves to the soft smell of the California surf.

Most of the Soarin' experience relies on the senses of movement and sight, as there are only a few brief sounds accompanying select visuals. The experience is further heightened via a beautiful musical score composed by

Jerry Goldsmith that runs the duration of the film.

All in all, Soarin' successfully takes guests into the world of flight, virtually thousands of feet above the ground and clear across the United States, without ever having left the comfort of a building in Orlando.



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Gatorland makes a blazing recovery

By Susan Veness



Photos by Matt Roseboom



Gatorland's giant gator head welcomes guests outside while a pool of real gators welcomes them inside.

The fire that almost brought a sudden end to the Gatorland story in 2006 has given rise to a blaze of a different kind – a blazing intensity to put the Kissimmee attraction firmly back on the tourist map.

It was just before 6 a.m. on Nov. 6, 2006, and the early-arriving employees arrived in time to see the famous gator mouth front engulfed in fire as nearly 80 firefighters from three counties fought four-story flames in an effort to contain the inferno and save the lives of the park's animal residents.

When it was all over, Gatorland employees surveyed the smoldering remains of the main entrance, gift shop and offices, then decided the best course of action was to rebuild — and expand.

"The fire was a hard blow to this family-owned business," says Mark McHugh, president and CEO. "Statistics say about 80 percent of businesses our size do not recover from a devastating fire such as the one we experienced.

"To date, we have probably seen a loss of more than two million in sales. This is largely due to the fact that we

received worldwide press on the fire with a much smaller amount of press on re-opening. But despite all the difficulties, 2007 was our fourth-best year ever, trailing only the last three years which were consecutive records."

It is a testament to the fact that Gatorland has always had a way of beating the odds. Not only did it reopen



Gatorland showcases alligators of all sizes.



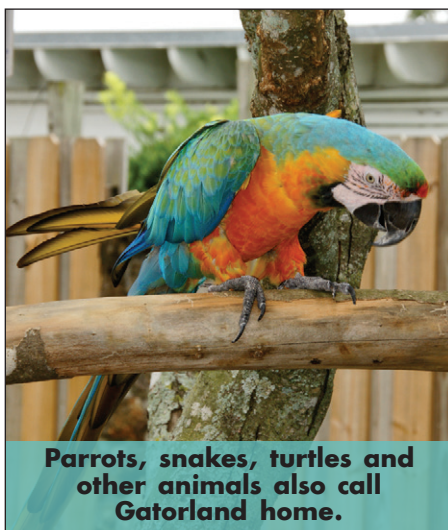
Long, secluded walkways through natural Florida swamps are some of Gatorland's more scenic features.

just two and a half weeks after the fire, it also moved ahead with plans for Gator Gully Splash Park, which opened in Spring 2007.

"We were scheduled to start construction of Gator Gully the week of the fire last November," McHugh recalls. "We had to quickly decide whether to delay construction in order to evaluate the full impact of the fire, which meant we might miss our spring 2007 opening deadline, or press forward, which turned out to be a great decision."

And Gator Gully has been a huge success, adding more entertainment options to an already relaxed, naturalistic atmosphere and extending the time guests spend visiting the park.

Children can't resist the dueling squirt guns mounted on the backs of two enormous gators (named Pop and Snap), the row of giant egrets that spill water from their beaks, a king-size



Parrots, snakes, turtles and other animals also call Gatorland home.

jalopy leaking madly from its radiator and tires or Grandma's Wet Shack, where no one comes out dry! Parents also appreciate the chance to sit under a covered cabana sipping a drink while the children play.

Hot on the heels of Gator Gully, the

park's four-million-dollar reconstruction project broke ground in October 2007, including an open-air admissions plaza, 4,000 sq. ft. themed gift shop, conference room, class room and office space. As McHugh states, "The entire complex has been designed to reflect our unique history and commitment to Florida's natural beauty." One of the first elements to return was the 'gator mouth', the park's icon since 1962, and a brand new gift shop, both making their debut this past May 23. The gator mouth no longer serves as the entry, but continues to serve as an impressive photo opportunity.

If determination returned the park to its former glory - and then some - dedication keeps it on the right track for good, wholesome fun. Director of International Sales Bret Chism is at the forefront of the Gatorland family, having joined the team in 1987 as a photographer, taking photos of guests



The Cracker Style Gator Wrestling show combines comedy, a bit of danger, and a whole lot of fun.

holding gators and snakes.

Never one to shy away from a challenge, in 1989 Chism took a step he never thought he'd take. He began performing in front of guests doing the park's Gator Jumparoo Show before moving on to gator wrestling, where he pioneered his signature move. When Bret sticks his hand in a gator's mouth and pulls it back out before the snap, the crowd quickly counts his fingers, then breaks into wild applause.

"I did the very first Cracker Style Gator Wrestling show here," says Chism, "Then I did the very first Snakes

of Florida show." In 2000 he co-wrote and performed the Upclose Encounters creepy-crawly show, tallying up a litany of animal bites and the sorts of stories grandfathers tell their grandchildren when the womenfolk aren't around to stop them.

"Once, I was heading down to feed the ostriches and zebra," Chism confides. "I walked into the enclosure and started talking to the guests who were watching when suddenly one of the ostriches kicked me. One of its toes got stuck in my back pocket and ripped my shorts off, leaving me wearing only

my underwear and T-shirt!"

Some of his stories are positively hair-raising, a true indication of his mischievous, boyish nature. "We had some contractors building the boardwalk over the alligator breeding marsh," he recalls. "There weren't any alligators in there yet, but just for fun we threw three eight-foot alligators in there with them. It took a while for the workers to spot them but when they did, they threatened to walk off the job. We told them we took the gators out, even though we didn't, so they would stay and finish."

Nowadays, the 50-acre park's

Orlando's First Attraction

Gatorland is gearing up to celebrate its 60th anniversary of operation in Central Florida. To put that milestone into perspective, Gatorland's 1949 opening date preceeds that of Walt Disney World by twenty-two years, making Gatorland the area's first major attraction.

Today, Gatorland is continuously growing and expanding, both by adding new features and enhancing old favorites. The Gator Jumparoo Show (pictured right) recently relaunched as a "leaner, meaner" version and the new Gator Gully Splash Park opened in May of 2007.

Below is a timeline of milestones in Gatorland's early years:

1949 – Florida Wildlife Institute opens featuring alligators and snakes.

Early 1950s – The Institute's name changes to Snake Village and Alligator Farm.

1954 – Snake Village is renamed once again, this time to Gatorland.

1975 – Founder Owen Godwin, Sr., dies, leaving Gatorland to his son, Frank Godwin who begins the attraction's first major expansion, ensuring its long-term survival and a place in Central Florida's history.



Hungry gators leap out of the water to feast during the Gator Jumparoo Show.



Alligator expert Tim Williams (in red) offers one guest an up-close encounter.

attractions include the Gator Jumparoo Show, Florida Cracker Style Gator Wrestling, interactive Upclose Encounters show, the refreshing Gator Gully Splash Park, centerpiece Gator Breeding Marsh, swamp walk trails and the fun Gatorland Express Train. Children can meet some of the park's cuddlier inhabitants at Critters on the Go, which will eventually include the park's newest residents, a

pair of South American tree porcupines. And, of course, there are the crocs and gators, ranging in size from the newest hatchlings to Alf, a 15-foot American crocodile.

Both McHugh and Chism agree, it's Gatorland's rich history, strong sense of family and down-home, Southern hospitality that make the park fit beautifully into Orlando's big picture.

Despite the obstacles the park has faced, it emulates its most famous residents in that it took a beating, came out a bit scarred, but shrugged it off and came back stronger than ever.

"The owners, employees and community have pulled together to insure that this 58-year-old business will survive" says McHugh.

Chism adds, "We invite guests to come in and spend some time with the family we call Gatorland, and

hopefully they will walk away with memories that will last a lifetime. After all, our mission statement is, Fun, Smiles and Special Memories."

For more photos and video from Gatorland, visit attractionsmagazine.com

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THE WAVE

good food, good wine,
good for the environment

BY JULIE SAUNDERS

Flavorful, sustainable, regional, organic, authentic: These words characterize Walt Disney World's newest restaurant, The Wave. Located in the former Food and Fun Center space on the first floor of Disney's Contemporary Resort, The Wave opened June 7.



Photos by Matt Roseboom

Diners enter The Wave through a dramatic brushed steel portal, imitating the curl of a giant wave. Soft blue neon lighting enhances the effect. The sleek reception desk is flanked by upholstered benches and a circular waiting area in shades of blue with black cocktail tables.

The 220-seat dining area is both intimate and expansive. Large booths and banquettes line the walls while tables set with white linen napkins and votive candles fill the floor. Chair backs and ceiling panels carry the wave motif throughout the room. Two 24-seat private dining rooms and a buffet cater to conventioners.

American Cooking With World Flavors

Enticing guests to The Wave is a unique menu, featuring organic and sustainable offerings. Chef de Cuisine Frank Brough describes 'American cooking with world flavors' as, "Full flavored, well-balanced, portion appropriate foods made with lots of stocks, broths and locally and regionally sourced ingredients."

Insistence on fresh and sustainable ingredients translates into a menu consisting of products selected at their peak flavor. Seasonal Soup features locally grown summer squashes with regionally

grown vidalia onions from Georgia. Brough researches seafoodwatch.org for Today's Sustainable Fish – Alaskan Butterfish, sautéed and served in a Zellwood corn and edamame stew with cilantro chutney (pictured below). "We embrace the spirit of 'environmentality' that Disney promotes," added Brough.



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Brough attributes 'world flavors' to the diversity of his talented team of chefs and staff, "We have folks from Latin and South America, Puerto Rico, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. This generates cross-culturally authentic dishes."

Entrees are priced between: \$8.49 to \$13.99 (breakfast), \$11.99 to \$20 (lunch) and \$17.99 to \$28.99 (dinner). Dessert is served in four themed groupings of three mini-favorites for \$7.99. The groupings are only a suggestion and diners may mix and match any three from the twelve choices.

Wine Time

Another forward-thinking decision at The Wave is reflected in the list of 95 modern wines that are all screw cap.

"Recyclable screw caps are nothing short of a revolution in wine packaging," said Master Sommelier John Blazon, manager of wine sales and standards for Walt Disney World Resort. With spoilage as high as nine percent for corked bottles, screw caps consistently provide the most reliable wine quality.

The Wave features southern hemisphere wines from Argentina, Chile, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa. Bottles range from \$37 to \$160. More than 50 selections – priced between \$7 and \$20 – are available by the glass, so allow time to study the extensive list. Indecisive diners may want to try the flights of three-ounce samplings from \$17.50 to \$25. "The next great glass of wine is just around the corner," said Blazon.

Vodka – It's What's For Breakfast

Somewhat surprising on The Wave's menu are breakfast cocktails. Mixed with fruit juices, Vitamin Energy Drink, Ribose energy supplement, natural caffeine and organic vodka, they go



The Wave's main dining area offers calm comfort with modern decor.

CHEFOLOGY

Michigan native Chef de Cuisine Frank Brough has been a chef for 30 years, spending the last 20 years at Walt Disney World.

A member of the opening team for Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa (1988), he served as Victoria & Albert's Chef de Cuisine before becoming manager of Culinary Programming at Disney Institute.

Additionally, Brough was Chef de Cuisine for Boma and Jiko at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge.



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Brough joins The Wave from the much-beloved Concourse Steakhouse – which closed on May 31 – and Chef Mickey's, where he served as Chef de Cuisine at both Contemporary Resort eateries.

coming soon: a family-friendly fourth floor

The closure of the Concourse Steakhouse paves the way for expansion of the quick service restaurant, currently named Tempo Grab and Go, as part of the multi-year revitalization of Disney's Contemporary Resort. The fourth-

floor Grand Canyon Concourse will become primarily family focused – including expansion of the entrance to Chef Mickey's later this year. The updated entry will include a photo opportunity in Mickey's kitchen. Say cheese!

by innocuous names, “Pure Sunshine” and “Pomegranate Splash.” It’s five o’clock somewhere.

Teetotalers will enjoy The Wave’s selection of whole-leaf Pyramid teas. Coffee is shade-tree grown certified-organic Mesa de los Santos from Colombia, described as smooth, medium-bodied with caramel undertones.

Super Lounge

With seating for 60, The Wave boasts the second-largest lounge at Walt Disney World. (The largest is Rix Lounge at the Coronado Springs Resort.) A massive four-sided bar commands center stage of the “super lounge” while small overhead lights resemble stars in a night sky.

In addition to fine wines, trendy cocktails – priced from \$8.25 to \$10.25 – are served in Wave logo glassware. On tap are locally produced organic draft beers from Orlando Brewing. Prices for domestic and imported bottled and draft beers run \$4.25 to \$7.25.

The Wave is open daily for breakfast, 7:30 to 11 a.m., lunch, noon to 2 p.m. and dinner, 5:30 to 10 p.m. The lounge is open from noon to midnight. For reservations, call 407-WDW-DINE (939-3463) up to 180 days in advance. The dress code is resort casual. ●●●●●



The four-sided, 60-seat bar at The Wave is one of Disney’s largest.

RECIPE

Chef de Cuisine Frank Brough’s Signature Soup

SMOKED TOMATO BISQUE

Yields eight, six-ounce servings.

Ingredients

2 Tbsp. olive oil	3 medium-sized smoked tomatoes
½ teaspoon ground black pepper	2 cups milk
1 ½ cups diced onion	¾ cup crimson lentils
¼ teaspoon thyme	2 tablespoons yogurt
1 cup diced celery	3 ¾ cups vegetable stock
½ teaspoon basil	kosher salt to taste
1 tablespoon chopped garlic	4 tablespoons tomato paste
2 tablespoons sugar	Tabasco sauce to taste

- Heat olive oil – add onions, celery and garlic. Cook until soft. Add smoked tomatoes.*
- Add crimson lentils, vegetable stock and tomato paste. Season with black pepper, thyme, basil, and sugar.
- Combine milk and yogurt – puree in blender. Adjust seasoning with kosher salt and Tabasco.

*Create a stove top smoker by putting water-soaked wood chips in a disposable tin foil container containing a rack. Place on stove top burner on low and add tomatoes. Cover, smoking tomatoes with medium heat until skins peel away easily.



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One Ticket to Bikini Bottom, Please

NICK HOTEL PREMIERES NEW 4D EXPERIENCE

By Ricky Brigante
Photos by Bret Roseboom

Nickelodeon Family Suites by Holiday Inn (better known simply as Nick Hotel) became the first and only hotel of its kind when it opened in June 2005.

The award-winning resort features numerous Nickelodeon-branded rooms, decorations, and other amenities, regularly featuring popular characters from Nick TV shows including SpongeBob Squarepants, Dora the Explorer, Blue's Clues, and Rugrats.

On June 24, Nick Hotel literally brought the Nickelodeon experience into a whole new dimension with the addition of their state-of-the-art 73-seat 4-D Theater Experience.



Through a partnership with media company SimEx-Iwerks Entertainment, who is responsible for creating such popular attractions as Shrek 4-D at Universal Studios, this new theater inside of Nick Hotel offers resort guests the chance to kick back and enjoy several immersive "4-D" short movies, laughing all along the way.

The theater features several different films, each taking guests on a fun-filled journey through virtual twists and turns. For example, the SpongeBob SquarePants 4-D film follows SpongeBob as he chases a runaway pickle through his underwater town of Bikini Bottom, bringing viewers



along for the ride. Other films playing in the theater include Extreme Log Ride, Deep Sea, and Funhouse.

Each film is preceeded with a virtual sliming of the entire theater, in which guests sit back and experience the sights and smells of the famous Nickelodeon green slime. While slime doesn't actually enter the theater, an abundance of well-timed water mist sprays leaves viewers wetter than in any other similar theater around.

SimEx-Iwerks Vice President of Attractions Development Mark Cornell told us that the new Nick Hotel 4-D theater cost over \$3 million to design and build inside a former hotel meeting room.

The shows feature a number of in-theater effects including wind, strobe lights, bubbles, seat vibration, neck and face air, leg ticklers, and multiple scents. You haven't lived until you smell the



Green 3-D glasses are given to each guest.

strong, but pleasant odor of SpongeBob's missing pickle. While the seats do not move, the experience is still completely immersive.

The projection quality of the films is second-to-none and looks crisper and sharper than most theme park 3-D/4-D attractions.

Taking part in Nick Hotel's 4-D Experience costs \$9.95 per-person for one show, \$12.95 per-person for two shows, and \$14.95 per-person for three shows. The shows are fairly short, so going for the three-show deal is recommended to get the most out of it.

The new Nick Hotel 4-D Experience adds one more element of fun to an already-exciting and visually stimulating resort stay.



SpongeBob and Patrick helped in the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress

An Upscale Orlando Landmark
Packed with Family Fun

By Deborah Brauser
Photos by Matt Roseboom



While largely hidden from nearby roads, the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress stands tall amidst its surroundings.

Since 1984, the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress has stood high above the crowded Downtown Disney area. Once inside its gates, however, the crowds and noise seem to melt away along the colorfully landscaped street and front drive. In the lobby, guests are greeted by a stunning 18-floor atrium with a skylight roof and glass elevators, some of the more than \$1 million in artwork scattered throughout the premises, and the happy “caws” and sometimes words of Merlot, the resident bright red macaw, and Kula, his cockatoo companion.

At more than 1,500 acres, the resort

prides itself on providing a relaxing oasis in the midst of the sometimes-chaotic activity center that is Orlando – a goal that Apryl Thomas of Watkinsville, Ga. says they’ve definitely achieved. “The location is fabulous. The property is like a world within itself, yet still very convenient to the parks and other great places in the Orlando area.”

Views from the hotel are especially spectacular as each of the 750 lake-, pool-, or garden-view rooms has a small private balcony facing International Drive, Downtown Disney or the Disney theme parks. This makes the rooms and the glassed corridors some

of the best places in the area to catch nightly firework displays.

Marketing Manager Kris Michalson, who has worked at the property for more than 23 years, credits their success in part to a very low employee turnover rate. “We even have some of the next generation working here now with sons and daughters of employees. So it really is like a big family. And with such a low turnover, guests will often ask about a specific bell person or childcare worker when they return to the property. With some families, we’ve literally watched their children grow up as they come back year after year.”

Amenities

The Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress hotel and the Villas of Grand Cypress, located just down the road, are both part of the overall Grand Cypress Resort umbrella. And though they're under different ownership and management, the properties happily share amenities, including a free shuttle that runs constantly between the two locations. A different shuttle is provided free of charge to Disney, SeaWorld, and Universal theme parks.

Paul Tang, the hotel's general manager as well as vice president and managing director of Global Hyatt Corporation explains, "We want to offer a self-contained, full resort experience where our guests can rest in between visiting the attractions, or to stay for a relaxing, safe, all-inclusive environment."

That's showcased in its two connected pools, beautifully manicured walking and biking trails, a winding private lake, and trees and greenery and colorful plants almost everywhere you turn.

The coolest place on property is the half-acre lagoon-style pool area with 12 waterfalls, a swim-through cave, two waterslides, a rope bridge, three whirlpools, and a large sundeck. Hidden inside one cave behind a waterfall



The lake offers many opportunities for relaxing or exercising.

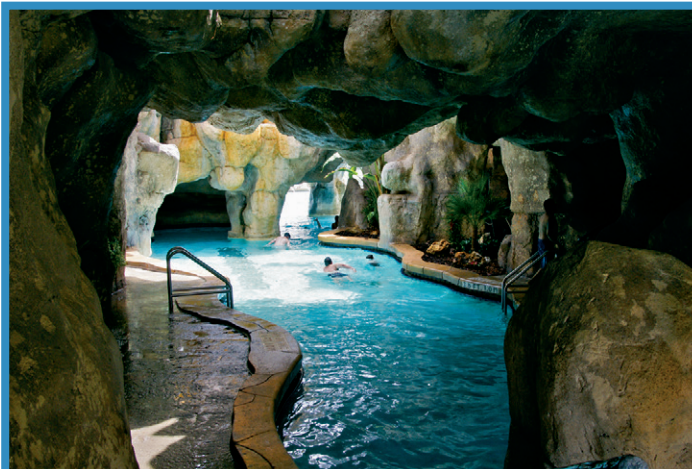
is the aptly named On the Rocks bar, an outdoor spot where guests can relax and grab a drink and quick bite before jumping back into the water. A long list of organized pool activities are offered each day, including cannonball contests, dives for tokens that can be used at the on-site game room and water volleyball tournaments. "Dive-in" movies are shown Saturday nights throughout the summer on a large portable screen.

Apryl Thomas, who recently stayed at the hotel with her husband and two daughters, highly recommends the pool area. "It's gorgeous and large. Dive-in movies are great and a treat, especially for the kids who find it a novelty. It was the best of both worlds - watching a

movie in the pool." She says it's a great place to travel with children. "They offer so much. You can honestly stay there and never have to leave the property."

Other water activities can be enjoyed on Lake Windsong and along its beach. With a resort fee of \$15 per day per room, each family member can get unlimited use of canoes, small sailboats and aquacycles. The resort fee also pays for bicycles, a driving range, a nine-hole Pitch 'n Putt course, a 24-hour Fitness Center, and a 12-court tennis complex.

Other onsite amenities include a 24-foot rock climbing wall, a salon, and a small grocery store complete with packaged "S'mores Kits" to use at the hotel's nightly fire pit.



Grand Cypress' pool area is filled with both excitement and serenity, providing guests with fun and peace.

Restaurants

The resort offers nine popular restaurants and lounges on site, plus two at the Villas. All are open to locals, as well as hotel guests.

La Coquina: The resort's highly praised seasonal restaurant is closed each summer, but opens from September through June. Its elegant dining room seats 114 and overlooks Lake Windsong on Sundays for its Champagne Brunch. On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings, it's all about its pricey but amazing Chef's Table. Limited to only 36 guests at a time, this seven-course set menu changes nightly, is paired with a selection of wines, and is served in the restaurant's kitchen area. Here, guests can watch their food being made, ask questions of the chefs, and even go back to the stoves for an up-close cooking lesson. Reservations required.

Hemingway's: Open for dinner only, Hemingway's has a relaxing Key West atmosphere and seafood specialties,

along with steaks. It also boasts the American Culinary Federation's Pastry Chef of the Year, who specializes in the ever-popular Dessert Shooter Sampler. Hurricane's Lounge is located just off this restaurant.

White Horse Bar & Grille: A sports bar with an upscale library feel, low lighting, and dark wooden floors to go with its large-screen TVs, the White Horse offers steak and lamb chops in addition to more traditional bar fare.

Cascade: Casually elegant dining for breakfast and lunch, the hotel's main dining room is named for its 35-foot high waterfall. (pictured right)

Palm Cafe: A deli-style indoor/outdoor restaurant for casual dining, the cafe can provide bagged meals with salads and sandwiches. The small General Store is attached.

Trellises: Located in the lobby, it offers a sushi bar and cocktails at night.

Perks: A coffee bar open only in the mornings.



At the Villas

Nine 18: A small, upscale restaurant with views of the golf courses outside its glass walls. It opened in October 2007 in the space formerly occupied by the Black Swan Restaurant.

The Club: Open for brunch and lunch only.

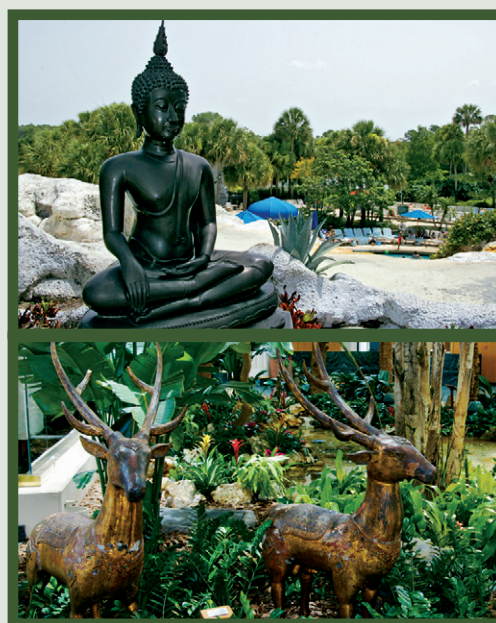
\$1 Million Worth of Artwork

The resort's art collection of more than 1,000 pieces isn't tucked away in a small exhibit room. Instead, you'll find museum-quality paintings, pottery, sculptures, statues, and artifacts sprinkled liberally throughout the property. Pieces of large artwork can be found on every floor of the hotel, including at each elevator landing. Here are a few examples.

- Many of the hotel's pieces have a strong Asian influence from the bejeweled lion statue that stands just inside the entry, to the giant onyx ship at full sail next to Trellises Bar, to the many wall-covering tapestries that show historic events in vivid color.

- Children are also a major theme as statues of children at play can be found inside Cascade's two-story waterfall, by the pool area, and greeting guests outside the front door.

- A seal statue hides in an outside waterfall, a deer peeks around a landscaped tree, and various birds sit amongst the indoor and outdoor gardens.





Horseback riding in open fields.

Golfing & Horses

For the truly luxurious and unique, guests can hop aboard the free shuttle to the Villas for golfing and horseback riding options.

Hidden away from the street, the three Jack Nicklaus-designed nine-hole courses and one 18-hole course roll into view. By the way, the 18-hole course is designed to remind golfers of the Old Course at St. Andrews. The site of several prestigious tournaments, the course also provides golf carts complete with GPS tracking systems. The Grand Cypress Academy of Golf is located next door for private or group lessons, a putting green and practice bunkers. In addition, Junior Golf clinics for kids between the ages of 6 and 18 are offered throughout the year.

Down from the courses is the larger-than-you'd-expect Equestrian Center, home to horses of all sizes, temperaments and "speeds." At this world-renowned center, guests can participate in guided trail rides around the resort, as well as

lessons in Western or English riding, jumping and dressage for all ages and skill levels – and at several different cost levels.

The Mediterranean-style Villas themselves offer up to four bedroom suites or a club suite with private terraces and views of the fairways or waterways, and are aimed at golfers or families who want more room to spread out – and don't mind jumping onto the resort shuttle for the hotel's other amenities.

Camp Hyatt

In addition to providing an in-room sitter or childcare facility for ages 3 to 12, the resort also offers its full and half-day supervised Camp Hyatt programs for children ages 5 through 12. Based on group consensus, activities may include necklace making, hikes, swimming and boat races, sand castle competitions, treasure hunts, nature bingo, and even visits to the "horse hotel." Camp Counselor Kelly Schumpf said the counselors enjoy the program as much as the kids. "It lets us try out all the facilities too. We don't want the kids to just sit in front of a TV, we really try to provide activities that combine exercise and fun and the outdoors in a group setting."

Future Plans

With its 25th anniversary next year, the hotel has decided to mark the occasion with a \$65 million renovation plan starting this October. General Manager Paul Tang explained, "When we opened, we were one of the first deluxe hotels in Orlando. And we want to stay com-

petitive and retain our customers with updates. Just like the parks open a new ride every year or so, we want to keep our guests coming back."

This won't be just a small upgrade, but an extensive overhaul. The iconic giant exterior will stay the same, but the inside will be completely transformed including updating guest rooms (complete with flat-screen televisions and laptop tables) and the conference areas, re-doing restaurants, adding a brand new 15,000 square-foot spa, and updating the pool amenities.

He said the hotel will stay open during the extensive renovations, with a completion goal of the end of 2009. The updates will only affect the Hyatt hotel property; the Villas will remain the same.

In addition, the hotel will continue striving to update and improve all of their guest programs and amenities. And on July 17, they announced their designation as a member of the Florida Green Lodging Program from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

When asked to summarize the hotel's philosophy of service, Kris Michalson said, "Vacations have become emotional journeys. So we try to specialize our activities. Everything is an option. Whether you're a golfer or a rider or a child, it's your vacation and we want to help you create your own experience. I think that's why we have such a high return rate."

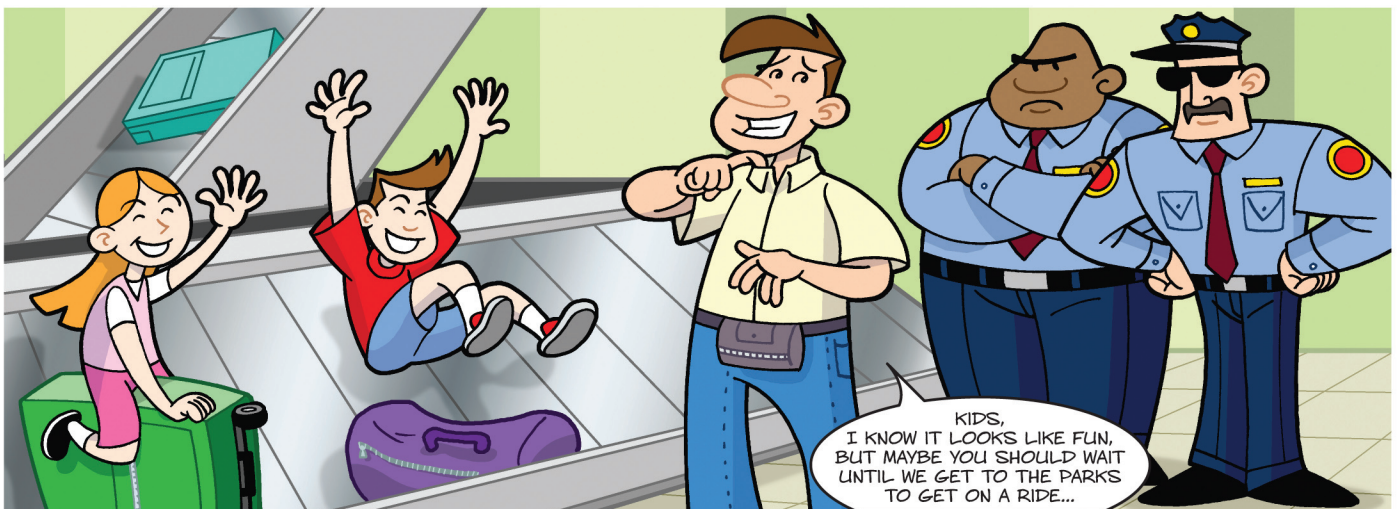
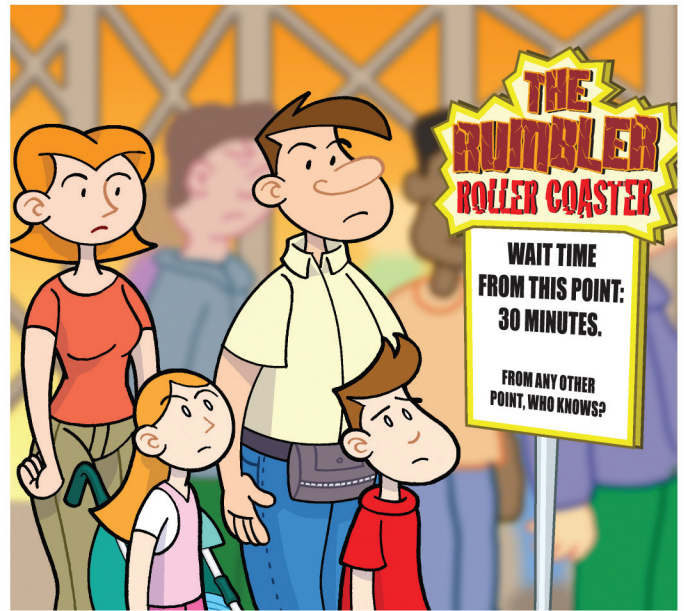
For more information, go to the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Web site at www.hyattgrandcypress.com.



Many rooms offer unique views of Walt Disney World, like that of Disney's Hollywood Studios seen here.

BEAMUSEMENT PARK

by John Green
& Pat Lewis



To learn more about our comic family, The Musers, head to attractionsmagazine.com.

PUZZLES

Can you figure them all out?

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you find all 7 differences in these two pictures?



Original photo taken at the Shenanigans! Wild West Comedy Show at Cypress Gardens.

WORD SEARCH

Answers are all related to Orlando Hotels.

Words can be vertical, horizontal, diagonal, and backwards.

I E E L U C E R A I N I Y C W M
H C U S N S O B L W N O C O D L
B N O A K L A W D R A O B D A O
U A R F R P R O L A T I E A A B
L S K A P O L Y N E S I A N T F
C S C R T P Y N H N R G C O P P
T I N I H S O A A C R R H R W N
H A O I S A L E L W N A C O S O
C N N C I O L L Y P S N L C S E
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N U S L A G E R C Y A S B R T N

All Star	Hard Rock	Portofino Bay
Beach Club	Marriott	Regal Sun
Boardwalk	Nickelodeon	Renaissance
Contemporary	Old Key West	Royal Pacific
Coronado	Polynesian	Safari
Dolphin	Pop Century	Swan
Grand Cypress	Port Orleans	Yacht Club



WIN A PRIZE!

Tell us where this photo was taken and you could win an **Attractions** t-shirt! E-mail your answer to mystery@attractionsmagazine.com

Hint: If you "jump" to conclusions, you just might "illuminate" the correct answer to this Walt Disney World location.

The deadline for entries is September 15, 2008. One answer allowed per person, per issue. Please include your name, mailing address and telephone number with your answer. Everyone who submits the correct location will go into a drawing. One person, randomly selected from all correct entries, will win a prize. We reserve the right to publish the names of all who submit the correct location. One winner per household allowed every six months.

Changes On The Way for Disney's Pleasure Island

New shopping and dining will replace all nighttime clubs.



Downtown Disney Vice President Kevin Lansberry discusses the changes coming to Pleasure Island.

Pleasure Island opened at Walt Disney World's Downtown Disney in 1989, largely as Disney's unofficial response to the popularity of downtown Orlando's nightlife club scene. Nearly 20 years later, as Orlando's clubs have come and gone, Disney is closing down all six of the clubs in its nighttime hot spot.

According to Downtown Disney Vice President Kevin Lansberry, the decision to close the Pleasure Island clubs was made based on guest suggestions. "We're making the changes that we're

making to Pleasure Island because our guests are asking us for more shopping and dining opportunities, and more other types of entertainment."

The whole project will take 18 to 24 months to complete and will bring a mix of new Disney experiences as well as outside businesses into the area.

Throughout the transition and construction, the rest of the shops and restaurants in Pleasure Island will remain open. Guests will still be able to pass through PI between the Marketplace and West Side.

New Features

While not all of the Pleasure Island club replacements have been announced, information about some new additions to Downtown Disney has been released.

Hanes will be sponsoring a create-your-own T-shirt store (concept art pictured here), allowing guests to customize their apparel and watch it being created.

Borrowing an idea from



Disneyland Resort Paris, a new giant tethered-balloon will float over the waters of the West Side, illuminated from the inside at night, allowing up to 30 guests at a time an excellent view of Walt Disney World.

Fan Response

Not all of Disney's guests agree that more shopping and dining is what Downtown Disney needs. Petitions have cropped up online in an effort to save the popular Adventurer's Club from closing. This club is quite unlike any other, as it offers a unique atmosphere filled with comedic shows and audio-animatronics.



Downtown Disney Vice President Kevin Lansberry doesn't rule out the possibility of the club's return, "Everything can be regenerated, so you never know. But there's no plan for that right now."

PUZZLE ANSWERS

WORD SEARCH

I	E	E	L	U	C	E	R	A	I	N	I	Y	C	W	M
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N	U	S	L	A	G	E	R	C	Y	A	S	B	R	T	N

LAST ISSUE'S MYSTERY PHOTO



Fountain Outside Beetlejuice's Graveyard Revue in Universal Studios

Congratulations to **Brandon St. John of Orlando, Fla.**, who correctly guessed last issue's Mystery Photo location. Brandon will receive an *Attractions Magazine* T-shirt.



Attraction News from Outside the Orlando Area

By Andy Guinigundo

Two Death-Defying Feats bested at Kings Island

Mason, Ohio – Over Memorial Day weekend, Robbie Knieval successfully jumped 24 Coke Zero trucks, beating his father's (Evel Knieval) Kings Island mark of 14 Greyhound Buses 33 years ago.

Another death-defying event took place on July 4 when high wire walker Rick Wallenda took a 2,000-foot walk on a cable 75 feet above the ground without the protection of a harness or net. This walk surpassed his grandfather's performance 34 years ago at the park.



West Coast Versions of Rides Open

Greater Los Angeles, Calif. – California theme park guests were not left out of the new attraction hoopla this summer. Universal Studios Hollywood opened The Simpsons Ride to much fanfare. Simpsons creator Matt Groening said, "For 20 years I've been dreaming about this ... a wild, thrilling Simpsons ride put together by a huge number of talented artists and amusement-park maniacs."

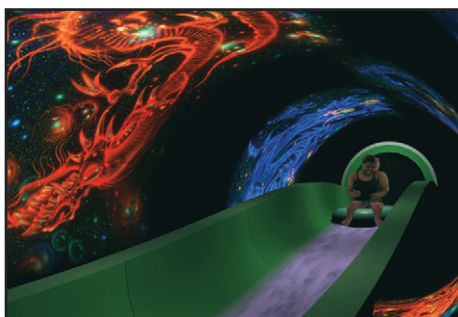
Similarly, in what was described as a

"spectacular ceremony" that included Disney executives, fireworks and skydivers, Toy Story Midway Mania opened in Disney's California Adventure.

Short-Lived Park May Re-Open

Park City, Kan. – On May 5, 2007 Wild West World opened promising theme park fun for the Kansas region. Poor attendance and even poorer weather were in part to blame for its closing and filing for bankruptcy a mere two months later on July 7, 2007. Now, the Wichita Eagle newspaper is reporting that a Florida-based company has purchased the park and is planning a re-opening. The new owners hope re-theming and construction will be completed by Spring 2009.

Schlitterbahn Opens New Thrill Ride



New Braunfels, Texas – Schlitterbahn is one of the biggest waterparks in the country. This summer they opened a new thrill water ride. Named Dragon's Revenge, the ride propels a pair of riders sitting on a double inner tube uphill eight times, through six "creepy" cavern tunnels, and down a two-story freefall. The tunnels include special effects like spinning tunnels, fiber optics, an original music score, fog, aromatic atmosphere and an encounter with the angry dragon.

Fire Ravages Universal Studios Backlot

Los Angeles, Calif. – Early on June 1, fire ignited at the Universal Studios Hollywood Backlot. The huge blaze unfortunately destroyed the classic King Kong attraction as well as the courthouse square used in Back to the Future and other movies. Some video and film was also lost. In the true show biz spirit of "the show must go on," all non-affected park areas were open normal business hours the next day. In gratitude, Universal welcomed firefighters with free admission during the month of June.

August Festival to Feature Fan Films

West Mifflin, Penn. – Kennywood Park outside Pittsburgh is having a film festival this August that will feature park fan videos. Videos will be submitted in one of five categories: Kennywood's #1 Fan, Create a Kennywood Commercial, Celebrate Pittsburgh 250!, Kenny's Picnic and Artist's Choice. Entrants will be competing for prizes and notoriety. On Aug. 29, the best will be viewed on the Kennyville Stage screen.

Rescued Dolphin Arrives at SeaWorld

San Antonio, Texas – In May, Alice, a 6-year-old bottlenose dolphin arrived by truck to SeaWorld San Antonio. The dolphin completed a one-year rehabilitation stint after being rescued off the Texas coast by the Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network. Unfortunately, she was deemed unreleaseable. SeaWorld agreed to take Alice. Alice will live in the hospital tank for a period of time, then will move to a quarantine tank before finally being integrated with the dolphin population.

Monorail Red Finally Transports Guests

Anaheim, Calif. – After arriving several months ago, the opening of the new Mark VII Monorail Red at Disneyland has been delayed on several occasions. July 3 marked a soft opening for the vehicle that began transporting guests that evening. The Mark VII Monorail Blue that arrived weeks after the red continues to make test runs.

He Really Did Go to Disneyland



Anaheim, Calif. – True to his word, Superbowl winning quarterback Eli Manning went to Disneyland. In this latest installment of the 22-year-old advertising campaign, Manning was asked, "You and the New York Giants just won the Superbowl, what are you going to do next?" "I'm going to Disneyland," was his reply. Manning participated in a Main Street USA parade and rode several rides. He was accompanied by his new bride, Abby McGrew.



*Tomorrowland
Magic Kingdom
July 2008*

Even the simple act of cleaning windows can bring a smile to guests' faces. A Magic Kingdom cast member creates a magical moment for some kids at Cosmic Ray's Starlight Cafe. Making washing windows a fun job, the kids enjoyed watching him squirt Mickeys and Minnies with his window cleaner. Maybe Goofy, Pluto, and Donald will find their way out of spray cleaner bottles in the future too.

Got a photo from Orlando that tells a story?

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